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No. 110.

COMING HOME, TO-NIGHT.

BY MARTIN DYER BRITS.

Lonely and slow the sad hours go,
Wearily drags the day,
All the light from my life is gone,
Vanished like dew away,
But ah! my vigil is almost done—
Soon will my heart be light—
For one I love is coming home—
Coming home to-night!

All in vain, for the whole day long,
I have tried to use my pen,
Writing and reading have lost their charm—
Will it come back again?
All in vain I have tried to sew—
Never a stitch is right—
Naught can I do, but think of you,
And wait for the tardy night.

Leadon and slow the dull hours go,
Heavily beats my heart,
Ah, me! what a cruel fate,
That those who love must part!
But though all day my skies are gray,
I know they will be bright,
For one I love is coming home!
Coming home to-night.

Hercules, the Hunchback: OR, The Fire-Fiends of Chicago.

A REVELATION OF THE GREAT CONFLAGRATION.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.

AUTHOR OF "FLAMING TALISMAN," "HOODWINKED,"
"BLACK CRESCENT," "BLACK HAND," ETC.

CHAPTER I. KNIFE AND FLESH.

LAVIED by the waters of a mighty lake, whose vast bosom smiled back the gleeful sunshine with a sheen of splendor; kissed by prairie breezes laden with unearthly essence; prosperous and beautiful; a proud city bidding fair to outvie the metropolis of the Pacific, and dim the glories of the Atlantic wonder—Chicago reared its evidences of amazing progress before the world.

In the vicinity of Union Park stands a dwelling of imposing build—an edifice combining comfort with display. To the parlors of this residence we invite the reader.

Seated near a veranda, seeking escape from the oppressive atmosphere, was a woman of captivating beauty—a brunette, whose dark, flashing eyes were like, in their glance, to the brilliancy of twin jewels, and whose form, alone, rivaled the loveliness of her features.

Pacing the room, his face frowning, hands alternately doubling and opening, and whole manner that of poorly-curbed impatience, a young man kept her company.

She, too, betrayed signs of uneasiness. Anon she would glance at him from under eyebrows delicate, yet rich as velvet; her foot patted the yielding carpet, the perfume of sandalwood jerked in her nervous hand.

"Sister!" he said, pausing before her abruptly.

"Well, brother?"

"The hour is near—"

"Sh!" she interrupted, quickly. "Be careful of your speech."

"Pah! Who to overhear us? The last servant left the house this afternoon."

"Are you certain of that?" gazing suspiciously around.

"Yes, certain."

"I say the hour is near—"

"The hour!" she interrupted again. "Say the minute. See," (drawing a watch from her belt, and pointing to its dial, while she fixed a piercing gaze upon him) "it lacks but five minutes to six."

"In five minutes, then," he added, thoughtfully, "we are twice enriched."

"And the pledge of the bullet-scar is kept."

He slowly raised his right hand before his eyes, and looked steadfastly at the palm. In the very center was a livid scar, round and plain.

"Yes," he uttered, in measured tones, "the pledge of the bullet-scar is kept."

A momentary shudder passed over his frame as he turned from the beautiful being he called "sister," and a strange look settled in his handsome features.

She had marked that scarce-perceptible shiver; a smile, full of sneering sarcasm, curved her crimson lips.

"You hesitate. You regret what we are doing."

"Hesitate!"—stopping short, midway across the room; then, dashing his hands to his brow, he cried, huskily: "No—I do not hesitate; but, would to Heaven the thing were done with! It is torturing me."

"A foolish weakness!"

"Call it what you will. Sister!"—he contemplated her in an indefinable way—"are you nervous to fulfill your promise to the Hunchback, when he shall tell us that Mortimer Gascon is—"

She stayed completion of the sentence by a waive of her fan.

"My duties are my own, Evard; attend to your debts as I shall to mine."

Another silence filled the room. A deep crisis was pending in that house; the words, the actions of each betrayed suspense.

Presently a footstep echoed in the hall. The massive door swung open, and a being, half human, half indescribable, stood in their presence.

The woman sprang from her seat. Her companion caught his breath, leaned forward, with hands half raised, and pallid face.

He who entered thus unceremoniously, was a mulatto of dwarfish stature, with crooked back, broad shoulders, fierce visage,



The Hunchback grasped her disappearing form, tripping himself, and together they fell outward.

and eyes of piercing glance. His arms were noticeably long; his feet longer in proportion; his ears grew prominently outward; his attire was of a careless kind—and one sleeve rolled up, discovered a wrist like a bar of iron, with muscles of steel and stain of night.

Across his left temple, partially hidden by a matted growth of black, wiry hair, was a broad scar, as if from the cut of a knife-blade. When he spoke his voice growled and hissed simultaneously; and while he contemplated the brother and sister, his large lips parted with utterance of the brief words:

"This done!"

"Done, Hercules!" cried the young man, striding forward and grasping that bare, hard wrist. "Are you sure? He is dead, then?"

"I say 'tis done!" growled the Hunchback, wrenching himself free, and scowling darkly. "When I say that, I mean he is dead. Why ask me if I am sure? Have I ever lied to you?"

"And the body?" interrogated the woman.

"Is being attended to now. I brought one with me who knows how to help, with his tongue in chains."

"But is it not too early? Suspicion may be—"

"Peace. Am I a fool? What I do, I do well. I tell you Mortimer Gascon is dead. His body is being borne away this minute."

"Where to?" asked the young man.

"You talk too much. But I will answer: mayhap to a dissecting room—"

"Then we are undone!"

"What folly!" the woman exclaimed. "Poison will be discovered!"

"Peace!" and there was an impatient accent in his tone. "There is no poison in him. He died naturally enough. When I told you the moment he would die, I did but guess. He left the world full half an hour ago—it was for want of care." Then sharply: "My money, now, Evard Greville. You are rich, since Mortimer Gascon is no

more, so you may handily give me beyond the sum agreed upon."

"I can not pay you now; I—" began Greville.

"Can not? Why? Come—beware of trifling!"

"I have no money by me. I must obtain it from a friend," hastily continued the other, as he caught the menace of the mulatto's words. "If you will meet me at the Washington street tunnel, two hours hence, you shall have your due."

"Enough. See that I am not disappointed, Evard Greville," and he concluded, threateningly: "Do not think I fear for myself, in what has been done. If you trifle, I will let out the secret!"

"You need not threaten, Hercules. I will be prompt."

"I will be there. Now, Hermione Greville, fulfill your promise."

She shrunk from him. All color receded from her face as this fierce being recalled a dreaded subject to her mind.

The eyes of the Hunchback bent keenly upon her.

"Hercules," she faltered, "desist from your fearful claim. Hear me: we are very rich, now—half of my share shall be yours, if you will forego—"

"This is a useless prayer. Peace. Let me have none of it. Your pledge, I say. Be quick!"

She retreated as he advanced a step.

"No—no—I can not grant it!"

"Ha! remember! The alternative is worse!"

"God help me!—it is!"

"Quick, then!"

To this demand it was evident that Hermione had hoped to make such tempting offers in the balance, as would induce the dwarf to release her from her promise.

But she had made a mistake. Hercules was determined.

Her whole form quivered in a nameless terror as she advanced to a table, whereon lay a small, sharp knife, and a plaster, apparently prepared for his use.

Raising the glistening steel in her hand,

she let it fall again, and staggered back.

"My God! I can not do it!" she cried.

"Oh, spare me this sacrifice!"

"No! It is my price for which I have labored. Have it I will—or—"

"His bony fingers took up the knife, and while he grew fairly hideous in mien, he drew near to the beautiful Hermione.

Evard, pale and immobile, watched the scene.

"Courage, sister! We have won the game—we must pay our ally his price for assisting. It will soon be over and no great harm can come from it," spoke Greville, though the utterance was choking, and his eyes were fairly starting.

"Prepare!" said the Hunchback, in a voice of unmistakable ferocity.

"Monster! My beauty will be gone forever! Will nothing else appease you?"

"Nothing. Prepare, I say, Hermione Greville, or it will be the worse for you."

He touched his thumb to the razored blade; then clutched the pearl handle firmly.

"See, it is nothing; a mere scratch, after all. I did not mind it much, when it was done to me!" and he pointed to the scar on his own temple.

For a second she stared wildly at him; then with a low moan, she sunk down.

Evard made a movement to assist her.

"Stand back!" ordered Hercules. "It is better thus. She will not feel the pain. Hand me the plaster from the table."

He turned to obey. When he again faced the dwarf—though only a brief moment later—a dread act had been perpetrated.

Hermione Greville was marked by an ugly, bleeding gash across the left temple, from which a piece of the fair skin had been severed.

"See," he said, when he arose from his task, "it is all over. Better this, than for her to become the wife of Hercules, the Hunchback! Ha! ha! ha! is't not so? Now, I am off. Remember, Evard Greville, the Washington street tunnel, two hours hence. Fail me, at your peril!"

He shook a dark forefinger toward the one who knelt beside Hermione, and then disappeared beyond the doorway.

When Hermione Greville revived, it was as if even her insensibility had not shut out realization of what had transpired.

Quickly, one hand sought her wounded brow. There was a chill recoil of her every nerve, and a groan of agony escaped her.

"Listen! Listen! Do not swoon again!"

"Hercules—where is he?" she breathed, with difficulty.

"Gone."

The answer strengthened her. Gradually she regained her feet, with his aid, tottering dizzily in his support.

It was a fate which gave her position directly before one of the long, gilded mirrors, and, in a second, she caught sight of herself.

A loud shriek rung through the room, and Evard held a dead weight in his arms.

The picture which met her gaze was too much to bear: a face she was once so proud of, now, and forever, was robbed of its smooth loveliness—so disfigured that time nor art could heal over the dreadful mark.

Feverish with excitement, the young man dragged her away.

"Hermione! Hermione!" he called. "Rouse!—rouse yourself! My God! the wretch has killed her!"

Swaying under the weight of his burden, he ascended the stairs. In vain he strove to restore her by words and opportunities, till he grew wild with desperation.

At the first landing was a table, with pitcher and goblet on it. Frantically he grasped up the first—then dashed it from him with a groan of despair. It was empty.

"She will die! O-h, for some assistance here! Hermione!—will you never rouse?—ha!—what—who are you?"

As he turned, from the stand, to continue up the stairs, he was confronted by a shadowy something, a form dimly outlined in the rays of a street-lamp entering like a ghostly halo at the window.

It was a human, yet it moved not. Though he challenged, it spoke not.

Something was tearing at his heart—fear! for the apparition, so sudden, so silent, coming when his conscience was fresh in wicked hardening, struck dread to the center of his soul.

"Who are you?" he cried again, and his voice echoed dimly through the house.

But only those echoes answered him. No sound, save the tumultuous beating of his heart, broke the grave-like stillness.

CHAPTER II. THE MASKED QUEEN.

THE Hunchback hurried along the broad hall, and out at the front door. As he descended the steps to the pavement, he was busily resolving something in his mind.

"Now, what," thought he, "can persuade Evard Greville, so far from home, to pay the money he owes me? The tunnel—it is a long walk from here. And, now I think on it, it lies directly in my route, or very near, which is the same. Something else than his business with me takes him there. It will do no harm to watch him when we separate; and watch him I will. So that is settled. Ho, there! Trix!"

"Here," answered a voice to his call.

A close cab was standing near the curb, a few pavements distant. He advanced to the vehicle, and peered inside.

"Is that you, Hercules?" came lowly from the depth of the cushions.

"Yes, it is I. How are you feeling, Mortimer Gascon?"

"Weak—very weak. I had grown tired waiting for you. What detained you?"

"Peace. Too much talk will make you weaker, Trix!"

"Ay," came responsively from the driver's box.

"Off, now, to our home in Polk street," and, with the order, he stepped in and closed the door.

"I waited to secure the price agreed upon—my reward for killing you," said the dwarf, sinking back opposite the form which occupied the rear seat. "How now?—are you quite dead yet?"

"Far from it, thank Heaven!"

"Peace, then. Rest your tongue, and your mind will strengthen."

The whip of the driver was cracking; the cab rumbled swiftly away.

Neither spoke again as they sped on and on past the numerous blocks that lay between them and their destination.

Hercules seemed absorbed in meditation—that meditation, a resumption of his conjectures as to what could draw Evard Greville to such a distance from his residence, when a place nearer might as well have suited. And, as before, he concluded with a mental resolution to follow the young man, after they separated.

When the cab halted, he called Trix, who descended from the box and flung open the door.

"A hand here," said the Hunchback.

They gently lifted the form that had accompanied them, and bore it out.

Into a weird-fronted dwelling of three stories, whose door opened, as if by magic, at their approach; and then up a narrow stairway dimly lighted by a lamp with red-tinted shade, which swung from the ceiling of the passage above.

The door closed after them, and a female followed in their rear.

Entering a long room on the second floor, they deposited their burden on a luxurious couch, and Hercules said:

"Here is your resting-place. How now, Mortimer Gascon—has the ride disturbed you?"

"I am weak—very weak," answered Mortimer.
 "Peace, then, and rest. You are out of danger, both of enemies and sickness. A month will make you right again."
 "Is this Mortimer Gascon?" asked the woman who had followed them.

"Yes, it is he—the last of the doomed. A miracle saved him. But that I was the instrument used, the pledge of the bullet-scar would have been kept."

The apartment was a bedchamber, but there was that in its furnishings of red, which gave it a fantastic surrounding; while long, crimson candles, in polished holders, shed a wavering halo round those assembled.

Upon the Hunchback, the effect was striking—seeming to give his strange, half-devilish form and mien a greater prominence.

Trix was a mulatto; a boy of about seventeen years. His face was intelligent, his build symmetrical—broad shoulders, and a stern cast of countenance betokening strength of muscle and purpose. The peculiar mold of features, poise of body, and growth of hair, told of Indian in his veins; and in his dark, glittering eyes there lurked a close resemblance to the piercing glance of Hercules.

The woman—standing statue-like to one side—was a singular personage. A jetty mask concealed her face, terminating in beaded lace that fell, folding, on a full bosom. From beneath the mask, volumed rich tresses of hair, black as the stain of a raven's wing, and drooping—in a gloss like fibers of silk—nearly to her feet. Over night-hued garments, whose unique fit discovered the form of a Venus—and whose skirts trailed far behind her—was thrown a cloak of light fabric, red as the sinking sun, and scintillating with spangles—as if the wearer had bathed in a sea of blood, and afterward in a shower of gold. Her hands were gloved in red, and in the eyelets of the mask—which would seem to hide the features of a Peri—shone orbs of unearthly brightness.

"Then Evard Greville thinks that Mortimer Gascon is removed forever from his path?"

"He does; more; that I, Hercules, was his tool. But, save talk. Here is our charge; let us nurse him well. Trix, begone—the horses."

Trix withdrew. When he was gone, the female asked:

"And your reward, Hercules?—you received both?"

"Not both, but one. Hermoine Greville is marked for life!"

He extended the thin strip of skin from the brow of Hermoine.

With a quick movement she seized it.

"It is mine!" she exclaimed, and there was a hiss to her voice as she uttered the words. "Carl Grand will not see so much to charm him now, in the one he calls 'beautiful Hermoine'; and this is some recompense for what she done to me!"

She concluded with a low laugh, full of deep significance, yet of silvery tone.

"Zone, what if you do love this man, after all? There's jealousy in your speech."

The Hunchback regarded her steadily; the half-sneer that ever dwelt in his face, grew deeper.

"Love him?"—an exclamation sharp and breathless; "ha! ha! ha! fear not. You do not yet know your sister, Hercules; it is to our interest that I should retain the love of Carl Grand—and he does love me!—but as for my loving him—yes—for the part he is to play, no more."

"Peace. You burn to a passion quick as powder to the match."

"Do you not see," she interrupted, impatiently, "that if he loves Hermoine Greville too well, my power over him is gone?"

"Yes, I see—"

"That power gone, then who will place the records in our hands?—the will? Who, Hercules? He, alone, knows where they are."

"Yes, yes. Enough." And he continued, while he gazed down at the blood-red carpet.

"When does your lover meet you again?"

"To-night."

"And this time, the place of meeting will be here," she added, without heeding his words.

"Zone!"

"Why do you start? I am tired of going elsewhere when I appoint an interview."

"This, then," thought the Hunchback, "is why Evard Greville—" but he finished aloud with the question: "Have you done well, Zone?"

"Why not? Evard Grev—"

She stopped short. Mortimer Gascon was staring at them, and listening with interest to their dialogue. A sign from Hercules had checked her.

"Where are you going?" asked Zone, as the dwarf moved toward the door.

"To meet a debtor."

"Evar—" but he silenced her, by placing a finger to his lips.

"When will you return?"

"Early or late, as it best suits," vanishing as he uttered the indefinite reply.

Zone turned to Mortimer Gascon.

"You must forget what you heard just now. It can do you no good to strive to recollect."

Now that we have a chance to view this Mortimer Gascon, we see that he is somewhat past fifty years—a man whose figure, though at present worn with illness, bore evidences of a naturally strong constitution. The sunken eyes, colorless cheeks, faint voice—all betrayed the severe ordeal of an unusual sickness.

He was studying his singular companion, and said, as she drew near:

"Do you wear that mask continually? Will you take it off for my curiosity?"

"No, I can not remove it. It is better for you not to see my face. Shall I bring you wine?"

She arranged a salver at his bedside, on which was a decanter of sparkling wine. Pouring out a glassful, she held it to his lips.

"I am in strange company," he uttered, slowly, while he strove in vain to pierce the woman's mask.

"You are with friends."

"I do not doubt it. Will you tell me what it was Hercules brought you?—that little thing you snatched so eagerly?"

"After your questioning, Mortimer Gascon, or I shall say 'no' to every thing. There—lie down again. Try to sleep. You need rest."

"You are a sister to Hercules," he continued, "Yet I can scarce think it; that mask surely hides a white face—"

"If you think I am his sister, or that I am

not, forget it. You may be mistaken in either."

When she had settled the invalid comfortably, Zone began walking to and fro, her slipped feet sinking noiselessly into the rich carpeting. Her head was bowed, her gloved hands were clasped and hanging listlessly.

Mortimer Gascon watched her, as the moments passed, and ere he knew it, sleep closed his eyelids. But, even in slumber, the brain was trying to decide upon her identity; he dreamed of her, moved restlessly on his pillow.

Zone paused in her walk. She was lost to every thing save the unspoken shapings of her mind.

"Do I love this man, whose line I have sworn to hate—whose father and mother before him, my father sacrificed in the cause of vengeance; whom I, as his daughter, against the sole survivor have sworn to thwart in the oath of the bullet scar, and make the instrument of my triumph over Hermoine Greville? Have I dared to love him?"

Was Hercules right in his suspicion? What is this feeling in my heart—a softness which holds me back when I most long to crush him? What is it?—love? Zone—girl!—are you crazy?"

She started and glanced uneasily about her, as if fearful that her thoughts had struck the ear of an eavesdropper.

But she was alone, save the presence of Mortimer Gascon; and a glance at the bed assured her that he was sleeping soundly.

Presently, a sound was heard which made her start. It was a footstep. The heavy, confident tread told that it was a man.

In another moment, the corner's hand was upon the knob.

With inconceivable quickness, she sprung to one side of the apartment, and touched a spring in the wall.

Instantly, a curtain, gathered in folds across the ceiling, fell downward, entirely screening that portion of the room where Mortimer Gascon lay.

"It is he. He has obeyed my instructions—entered with the key I gave him, followed to the source of the entry light, and—"

The door opened, and Evard Greville stood before her.

CHAPTER III.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

LEAVING the house wherein lay Mortimer Gascon, Hercules started for the appointed place of meeting with Evard Greville.

A brisk walk of a few squares shortly brought him to the spot designated.

Though the hour was early, a grave-like silence reigned; the gale that was blowing seemed to moan and howl on the night.

He glanced around in vain for some sign of the young man.

A straggling figure passed close by him, with face averted, and vanished in the gloom beyond with noiseless tread.

"Satan devour me!" muttered he. "I think I know that shape. Where have I seen it? No matter—I am not here to tax my brain with wondering at strangers."

"Death! Evard Greville is late. What keeps him? Will he dare—No, he knows better."

He folded those great, muscular arms across his broad breast, then looked around a second time. But he saw no one.

The minutes flew by. He stood there like a thing of the gloom itself; his shaggy head gradually sunk forward, and his lips moved in a low muttering.

"Has Zone done well? Why has Evard Greville come to her house? What if he should discover me there?—learn of our relations? He would suspect the trap—and that would balk us. Yet she is shrewd. But for her fascination of him, we might labor till eternity—bah! let Zone be to herself. She will not trip us—ha!"

"Toll!—toll!" came the waver of a bell-note, echoing on the still air.

Soon another doled forth its clarion strokes. And another, as if in answer, mingled discordantly with the first two—the three heralding the outbreak of a fire.

He listened. There was something in the sound which riveted him; he glanced up at the sky which, south of him, was tremoring in a crimson hue.

Brighter grew the rays; steadfastly he watched the luminous glare.

A rustling noise drew his attention.

The same shadowy figure which had once before passed him glided by, almost brushing his sleeve as it went.

An angry frown wrinkled his dark-skinned brow.

"What means this? Am I dogged? That shape has been spying upon me. Who is it? Devils! I'll soon find out!"

He sprang forward in pursuit. He could faintly discern the fleeing object ahead of him, and, with eyes fastened on it, he ran at his utmost speed—swift as a hound, and resolute.

Suddenly it vanished. When he reached the spot where he had last seen it, it was gone as mysteriously as if into the ground.

Muttering a curse, he continued on in the direction of his home.

"So, Evard Greville has failed me—owls read him for it!" he growled, disappointedly. "I'll be even with him. Better that he held a viper to his throat than to trifle with Hercules, the Hunchback! Fiends! here is a fire!" the last called forth by noting an extraordinary increase in the bright reflection overhead.

Another glance showed him that the fire was spreading rapidly.

"It is coming this way!" he exclaimed, increasing his gait. "Has hell burst onto us? See!—there's the flame!—and there!—and there!"

It seemed to him that a wall of fire, reaching from earth to heaven, was marching forward.

On every side arose shouts and cries. Engines were rumbling past with winged violence. He saw groups and crowds of men, women and children fleeing precipitately. A steady strange, mastering excitement had entered his breast. From a quick walk, he fell into a run.

Turning the corner at Wells street, he halted abruptly.

There, in front of him, going in the same direction as he, was a figure his keen eye could not mistake, even in the marvelous change from gloom to glare. It was a man—the one who had passed him twice at the tunnel.

Only for an instant did he pause. Then, with a renewal of his determination to discover the other's identity, he dashed forward.

"Halt! Halt, there!" he cried, threateningly.

But in the din, which now prevailed to a deafening extent, the figure did not seem to hear.

It, too, was running, and at sound of the pursuer's voice, it only sped on faster.

"Halt!" cried Hercules, again, while his strain of every nerve drew him nearer to the object of his chase each second.

"Halt!—or I'll twist your limb from limb, when I catch you!"

Twice, thrice, he nearly lost sight of the man, for the street was packed with humans—vehicles thundered by, loaded with household goods, and terrified families.

When nearly in front of his house, he was but a few leaps in the rear.

"Halt, I say!—I have you! I would know who you are that dogs my steps—ha! Satan!"

The pursued party wheeled suddenly. The flash of steel, for a second, blinded Hercules, and, in the same instant, a stout arm dealt him a blow with a weaponed fist.

He staggered dizzily under the unexpected assault—reeled out into the street, falling.

"Look out! Look out!" yelled a hoarse voice.

A wagon, with horse snorting in terror, came dashing along. The driver held the reins with all his force of arm, and strove vainly to turn aside the maddened beast in its headlong course.

But the Hunchback heard not the warning.

"Look out, there!" rose the cry again.

Too late! The hard shafts struck the tottering man, and as he was knocked back again to the pavement, he clutched wildly at the thin air.

Blood streamed from the cuts on his face and head, half blinding him; the thick smoke clouding his breath, was strangling him.

Still, with his nature of iron, and more than human endurance, he did not fall.

The last of the fleeing crowd had disappeared.

Half smothered, to his ears came the yells of men, and shrieks of women; while, on the other side, there reared the lurid sheet which advanced in the front of the gale!

He felt the heat in his face. Sparks showered around him.

Presently, above the savage roar of the flames, he heard the scream of a woman. It roused him.

Mustering his remaining energies, he started, with a drunken step, to gain the interior of the house.

At one wrench he forced the door—closing it quickly after him. And none too soon; for the greedy element, actually pressed down by the force of the wind, was beginning to shoot through the street like a molten river!

"Zone! Zone!" he called.

"Hercules!—here!—here!" answered the voice of Zone; and he made his way in the direction of the sound.

Up, up to the third story. Here he encountered Zone and Evard Greville. The latter was ghostly in fear.

"To the roof!" cried the Hunchback.

"The street's aflame! We must jump from house to house!—and mayhap it is too late for that! To the roof!"

On one side of the dwelling was a space. On the other a long row of houses, joining, offered, perhaps, an escape. Yet even here there seemed little hope.

The trap opened near the eaves.

Zone was first to step out. As she did so, a dense volume of smoke choked and blinded her. She gasped for breath, turned dizzy—tripped forward, and, uttering a loud cry, went helplessly over into space!

But a strong arm caught her!

The Hunchback grasped her disappearing form, tripping himself, and, together, they fell outward!

As they plunged down, he gripped the eaves with his disengaged hand—the grip of a giant—and only that frail hold held them from death, twisting, swaying, dangling over a mighty oven, whose devouring tongues darted up around them in hellish glare!

The sight brought Evard Greville from his stupor. He grasped the wrist of the Hunchback—pressed those steel-wrought fingers tighter against the eaves, to make their hold the stronger.

Then, through the smoke, there appeared another on the scene. It was Trix, the Indian mulatto. He carried a heavy club, and this he raised aloft, as he sprang toward Evard Greville.

"Let go! Let them fall!" he screamed.

"Stand back!" thundered Greville.

"Let go! or I'll strike!"

A pistol leaped from the young man's breast, and while he took a hurried, excited aim, he did not neglect his retaining clasp on the wrist of Hercules.

"Help! help! help!" shrieked Zone. But what use in the appeal? Death grinned in the faces of the imperiled ones!

(To be continued.)

Madeleine's Marriage:

OR, THE HEIR OF BROADHURST.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLET.

AUTHOR OF "UNDER THE CLOUD."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEATH-MESSAGE.

MADELEINE felt no uneasiness at Dorant's not returning that night. The state of the roads would have made them dangerous for riding; on foot she knew there could be no peril, well acquainted as he was with the route.

In the morning the snow had ceased, but lay an unbroken crust over the bluff, while the cold had considerably moderated.

Expecting her husband to an early breakfast, she prepared the repast, and lighted the fire in the outer room. The table stood in the adjoining one, neatly spread with its white table-cloth, with the loaf on a wooden trencher, and a plate of toast on the hearth, with a pot of fragrant coffee, and new-laid eggs ready to be boiled.

The wife and mother sat by the fire in a reverie. Her thoughts, in spite of herself, recurred to the stranger who had come the day before with his strange tidings and mockery of her hopes. It was cruel to come to her happiness, and to have the possession snatched from her!

Would it be happiness, then, to be the mistress of wealth?

She was convinced of the fact. All her life she had longed for state and luxury, beyond her reach. Her mother had fed her ambition with descriptions of the splendor in which she had once lived, in the country of her birth, and to which she hoped one day to introduce her child. They had been on their way to the realization of these

hopes, when the mother had been snatched from her.

Why must her childhood have been so joyless, when she had a born right to all she wished to have? How was it that none could discover her kindred? Had her protectors really sought them? A flood of bitter recollections swept over her.

She forgot to be thankful for shelter given her so many years; for the love that had guarded her from evil; that had laid at her feet all really worth possessing in life—true affection; unselfish devotion!

Ungrateful spirit! unable to discern the anguish in store for thee, should it please righteous Heaven to grant what thou so blindly cravest!

She glanced around her. Never had the hut appeared so squalid, narrow, and comfortless. The snow had incrustated the window-panes, shutting out the dreary view of the sea; but she heard the sullen, monotonous roar of its waves.

The elder Dorant came in from his out-door labors, and wanted his breakfast. Madeleine roused herself from her discontented thoughts, spoke cheerfully to him, and set the repast before him. Then she went into the little chamber, and washed and dressed her little girl.

Oriel's infantile glee and fresh beauty soon chased away low spirits. She took the child in to breakfast, and listened smiling to her lively prattle.

Old Dorant went out again, and the wife began to be uneasy at the non-arrival of her husband.

She went to the door and looked out. The morning was bright and beautiful after the storm.

She heard the roll of carriage-wheels. Presently little Oriel gave a shout of joy, clapping her tiny hands.

"Oh, see, mamma, what a pretty carriage! And the lovely black horses! Is papa coming in that carriage?"

"No, my child," answered the mother, and drawing back the child, she closed the door.

The carriage stopped in front of the cottage. A gentleman alighted, and tapped lightly at the door.

Madeleine went and opened it.

The stranger of yesterday stood there, awaiting her permission to enter. He was richly dressed, and altogether improved from his first visit. He saluted her courteously, with an air of deference quite new to her; something never accorded by the neighbors to whose society she had been accustomed of late, exclusively.

She invited him to take a chair.

"I have taken the liberty of calling," he said, "for my traveling-bag. I missed it when ready for my return to Sussex."

Madeleine brought the bag, and handed it to him without reply.

"And—pardon me, madam, if I venture to ask if the decision you expressed yesterday—"

"It is unalterable, sir," answered the matron, coloring with anger that he should even allude to that conversation. She had felt ashamed of herself, in the recollection.

The man before her seemed to divine her thoughts.

"You have scarcely had time," he remarked, in a low, insinuating tone, "to reflect on the duties imposed by justice to one's family and birth."

"Weighed against the obligations of the holiest of human ties, they would be hardly a feather in the balance," returned Madeleine, haughtily and with spirit.

"I submit, madam, to your determination. I had only to communicate it to the executors of your late uncle's will. My task is accomplished!"

"Then why does he linger?" murmured the wife to herself. Marritt noticed her change of color, and the agitation she could not repress, and drew his conclusions favorably to his wishes.

"I hope, madam, you may never have cause to repent your resolution."

She made no answer, but rose and bowed, as if anxious for his departure. The unwelcome guest, after a glance at the child, who sat gazing at him, bowed a graceful adieu, and went out, closing the door behind him. Little Oriel ran to the window.

"Oh, mamma, the beautiful carriage is going away."

"Come here, my dear," said the mother, gloomily.

"Mamma, if the gentleman wanted to take us in that pretty carriage, why did we not go?"

The mother caught the child in her arms, and burst into tears. Tears of self-reproach and shame. Then, dashing them from her eyes, she started up.

"It is very strange Lewis does not come!"

An hour went by, and another, and another. Madeleine's anxiety deepened into fears that something disastrous had happened. She besought her father-in-law to go in search of his son.

He laughed at her terrors. Lewis had gone on to the next town, or, perhaps, had gone to see Duclos aboard the vessel, and to purchase a few supplies, he had to be so much from home.

"But he promised to be back early this morning; and I never knew him fail to keep a promise he made to me."

"You must be reasonable, Madeleine. He may have met with a profitable piece of work!"

"A thought of what 'might have been'—when no one belonging to her would have needed to seek employment in that way, again filled her with bitterness."

"Remember," added the old man, "he has you and the child to work for; and he finds it hard enough to earn what will keep you all from want. Harder than you know—let me tell you."

Was he uttering a reproach? Madeleine turned away, and wept silently.

"You should make it easier for him—as much as you can—without fretting!" persisted her father.

"Why do you reproach me?" was the answer, with a burst of grief. "Have I not done all I could—and borne all—with patience?"

"Not quite with patience. I have seen you crying many times."

"And was that a crime?" Her spirit rose under the implied blame.

"When you married my son, you knew he had nothing to depend on but his hands for a livelihood. He loves you, and you ought to be satisfied."

"Who says I am not satisfied?"

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Our Arm-Chair.

Texas and Our Authors.—“Lone Star,” writing us from Texas, says: “I am a constant reader of the SATURDAY JOURNAL, and I am especially delighted with your stories of Texas life, by Captain Mayne Reid and Mr. Alken. I would say, having lived in Texas for sixteen years, that their stories, as far as people, scenery, adventure, etc., are concerned, are as life-like as pen can make them. To those who doubt the almost incredible stories of the vast amount of cattle, wild horses, etc., which roam over the boundless prairies here, I will state that, in two months no less than half a million of cattle have died, and yet they are not missed at all.” Which is a pretty big drove, especially to those of us who think one cow and one horse “some stock.”

Texas is a good country, and where now the Apache and Comanche move, will, in another generation, spring up towns, farms, church spires and school-houses. What now is real living romance to our writers will then be romance of what is forever past. If not the “New Atlantis,” which De Soto longed to reach, Texas yet is a land of promise, as capitalists and enterprising settlers are fast discovering.

The Reverse Side of the Question.—“If I had not been born,” says the Mussulman, “then another must have occupied my place”—which is a very philosophical way of saying that there is just as much life predestined to occupy the earth. To our modern way of thinking this continent was especially reserved for the work it is now doing in conserving the forces of Old World surplus, or in answering to the wants of Old World needs, and therefore it was predestined that Columbus should arise at the propitious moment to discover the New World. This is the favorite mode of treating the matter, but, that there is a reverse side to the question is very certain. As, for instance, a journalist “away down East,” writes:

“Columbus Christopher was not the unmitigated blessing in disguise that stump orators would make out. The Aborigines, for instance, never thanked him, for one party; the Africans had small ground to be grateful for the market he opened for them. Here are two continents that had no use of him. He led Spain into a dance of great expectations which ended in her gorgeous ruin. He introduced tobacco into Europe, and laid the foundation for more traffic and nervous diseases than the Romans had in a thousand years. He introduced the potato into Ireland, indirectly, and that caused such a rapid increase of population that the great famine was the result, and an enormous emigration to New York—hence Tweed and Hall and the constituency of the Ring. Columbus is really responsible for New York. This reminds us of Artemus Ward’s remark, that it would have been money in Christopher Columbus’s pocket if he’d stayed at home and put his funds into a circus.”

This may be the “argument negative,” but for all that it is very suggestive.

We commend the following to all concerned. It is good advice:

LEADING PAPERS.

“Editors Star Journal:

In glancing over your valuable paper, bearing date of March 30, I find that one of your correspondents in “Our Arm-Chair,” speaks of his paper going the “grand rounds,” and being read by so many that by the time it returns to him it is nearly worn out. Now, I used to be bothered—I use this word for I have found it to be a bother—in the same way. I took a paper that I was fond of, and when it came, I would lay it down until I had time to sit down and read it through, and when I got ready to do so I would almost invariably find that Mr. or Miss So-and-so had asked the loan of it for a short time, just to read such and such a story; and I would be obliged to wait for them to finish it before I could read it. I was bothered in this way until I thought if the stories suited them as much as they did me, why, they ought to be able to purchase a paper of their own; and as I had the first right to the reading of it, I kept it in my pocket until I had done so. This rule I follow.

“Being connected with the press myself, I find that if A subscribes for a paper, and then lends it to B, C and D, the publishers are not benefited a great deal by the operation. Perhaps it might answer at first to lend a paper until the person who borrows it has become interested in a certain story or stories, and then gently hint to him the propriety of his subscribing for it so as to have one of his own. Let him purchase it of his newsdealer; or if there is none in his place, subscribe for it. If he thinks one copy for a year costs too much, let him get up a club and so get them less.

“Now, the SATURDAY JOURNAL is too good a paper to be thus dealt with. The publishers are endeavoring to issue a paper that shall meet the wants of the great reading public. What success they are having is shown by the rapidly-increasing circulation. (This any one can find out by just asking the newsdealers.) Suppose there were five thousand taking the paper, and that each has one or two of these borrowers, see what a loss it would be to the publishers. No, no, friends; if you are tormented with these borrowers, do not follow up the practice of lending; but, get them interested, and then if they wish to just “finish their story,” why then, let them sign for or buy the paper. As far as the SATURDAY JOURNAL is concerned, one story by Capt. Mayne Reid, or Albert W. Alken, or Mrs. Jennie D. Burton, is alone worth the subscription price for a whole year. In conclusion, to all borrowers, sign for the paper, if you like it, and you will be better pleased, as most assuredly will be the one you have been accustomed to borrow of—and I know the publisher will.”

L. A. MURILLO.
Corrymans, N. Y., March 23d, 1872.

We have a word to add: take no paper that does not merit your fullest confidence, both in its literary and moral character. Remembering that a poor, or a bad paper, in a family, can do almost irreparable injury, be sure that your choice of your family journal is the right one, and then take it regularly, and file it for preservation and future use.

SUITABLE TO THE SEASON.

AND now approach the days of spring house-cleaning, general chaos and mole. “Tis true, ‘tis pity, and ‘tis true, ‘tis true” that this season of universal discomfort must necessarily prevail. It holds a station among the incontrovertible facts which will not admit of being put aside, and the rejuvenation of the household belongings amply repays the temporary inconvenience when once scrubbing-brushes are laid away in the kitchen closets, when tubs, brooms and buckets, are banished to their proper spheres.

Oh, ye housekeepers of amphibious proclivities! Now comes the season of your delight. The time when, without question or reproach, you can assault your domestic with a miniature deluge, when the watery element shall reign triumphant from attic to basement. All grapes are not sour, and we are not all born with souls to appreciate these advantages. There are some among us who regard the occasion of spring cleaning with dread, yielding to it only as a dire necessity.

Curtains come down and carpets come up; furniture is turned loose without regard to favoritism; closets unbosom themselves, and drawers relinquish their contents; silver is hidden in midst of the feather-beds, while doors and windows stand wide, enduring their share of the polishing process; dust rolls itself in tangible form from corners where no one previously suspected dust was abiding; last year’s cobwebs dangle down from unthought-of retreats where the housemaid’s broom has thus long slighted them; limpid water falls upon the walls and trickles down in sullied drops.

Ho, then, ye much-abused hosts! Penetrate every nook, search every closet, lay violating hands on the most sacred bits of virtue and guarded bric-a-brac.

Pling out the banner of your victory in the form of fresh hangings and snowy draperies. Replace the dingy winter-bouquet with the fresh-growing flowers of spring. Put away the pieces of somber utility which can now be dispensed with, and introduce all the brightness into the familiar rooms which you can well confine there.

If you indulge in a new carpet, get a pretty one; if a strip of oilcloth, let it be bright and cheerful; if a piece of furniture, choose it of light and graceful pattern. Love of the beautiful is one of the best of refining influences, and cheerful surroundings are as good as a tonic to a sick spirit.

There is no cheaper luxury in, or about our dwellings than bits of living bloom. A sprig of magnigone with its fragrant breath will ease many a headache; a stem of hyacinth with its clustering bells will ring a peal of sweet music through the discord of a day of wearing trials; a tiny plot of brilliant-hued verbenas will afford a whole summer’s length of satisfaction.

Looking forward to such pleasant results, the period of spring house-cleaning loses its formidable aspect. We behold it as the agent of an auspicious troupe of welcome months to come. We see our favorite parlor thrown open, our pet furniture divested of the swaddling-clothes which have protected it from the penetrating grime in regions where bituminous coal prevails, we feel a glow of gratified pride in knowing that cleanliness reigns from roof to cellar, not in appearance only, but in reality as well. And when the whole house has put on its holiday dress, we are incited to follow suit, donning, not only a becoming garb, but a cheerful temper and sunny countenances through sheer force of good example.

J. D. B.

THE INDISCRIMINATE DANCE.

[We are permitted by the publishers to make the following extract from Rev. T. De Witt Talmage’s new book, “The Abominations of Modern Society.” It will give readers some idea of the power of this celebrated speaker and writer. The picture here presented is a wonderful piece of word-painting. The entire volume abounds in such passages.]

It is the anniversary of Herod’s birthday. The palace is lighted. The highways leading thereto are ablaze with the pomp of invited guests. Lords, captains, merchant princes, and the mightiest men of the realm are on the way to mingle in the festivities. The tables are filled with all the luxuries that the royal purveyors can gather—spiced wines, and fruits, and rare meats. The guests, white-robed, anointed and perfumed, take their places. Music! The jests evoke roars of laughter. Riddles are propounded. Repartees indulged. Toasts drunk. The brain befogged. Wit gives place to uproar and blasphemy. And yet they are not satisfied. Turn on more light. Give us more music. Sound the trumpet. Clear the floor for the dance. Bring in Salome, the graceful and accomplished princess.

The doors are opened and in bounds the dancer. Stand back and give plenty of room for the gyrations. The lords are enchanted. They never saw such poetry of motion. Their souls whirl in the reel, and bound with the bounding feet. Herod forgets crown and throne—every thing but the fascinations of Salome. The magnificence of her realm is as nothing compared with that which now whirls before him on tiptoe. His heart is in transport with Salome as her arms are now tossed in the air, and now placed akimbo. He sways with every motion of the enchantress. He thrills with the quick pulsations of her feet, and is bewitched with the posturing and attitudes that he never saw before, in a moment exchanged for others just as amazing. He sits in silence before the whirling, bounding, flashing wonder. And when the dance stops, and the tinkling cymbals pause, and the long, loud plaudits that shook the palace with their thunders have abated, the entranced monarch swears unto the princely performer: “Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it to thee, to the half of my kingdom.”

Now there was in prison a minister by the name of John the Baptist, who had made much trouble by his honest preaching. He had denounced the sins of the king, and brought down upon himself the wrath of the females in the royal family. At the instigation of her mother, Salome takes advantage of the king’s extravagant promise, and demands the head of John the Baptist on a dinner-plate.

There is a sound of heavy feet, and the clatter of swords outside of the palace. Swung back the door. The executioners are returning from their awful errand. They hand a platter to Salome. What is that on the platter? A new tankard of wine to re-kinde the mirth of the lords? No! It is redder than wine, and costlier. It is the ghastly, bleeding head of John the Baptist! Its locks dabbled in gore. Its eyes set in

the death-stare. The distress of the last agony in the features. That fascinating form, that just now swayed so gracefully in the dance, bends over the horrid burden without a shudder. She glows over the blood; and just as the maid of your household goes, bearing out on a tray the empty glasses of the evening’s entertainment, so she carried out on a platter the discolored head of that good man, while all the banqueters shouted, and thought it a grand joke, that, in such a brief and easy way, they had freed themselves from such a plain-spoken, troublesome minister.

What could be more innocent than a birthday festival? All the kings from the time of Pharaoh had celebrated such days; and why not Herod? It was right that the palace should be lighted, and that the cymbals should clap, and that the royal guests should go to a banquet; but, before the rioting and wassail that closed the scene of that day, every pure nature revolts.

Behold the work, the influence, and the end of an infamous dancer!

OBSTINACY.

FIRMNESS is one thing and obstinacy is another. It is good to be firm in the resisting of evil, firm in having your children obey you, and firm in making your scholars mind what you say to them. But for a person to be so obstinate as not to be convinced when they prove them to be wrong, is the height of error.

Doubtless you have come across persons who will invariably spell or pronounce a word wrong, which you kindly correct. They will not believe you are in the right. To show them that you are so, you produce the word in your dictionary as a proof. You get very little thanks for so doing. Your obstinate person will make out that your dictionary is not a correct one.

Not a great while ago a lyceum was started by the young men of the town, and upon one occasion the subject for debate was, “Is the love of money the root of all evil?” Strange to say, it was decided in the negative. Now, as the Scriptures positively say otherwise, you may imagine what a learned set belonged to that lyceum, to know more than Timothy. That was not the obstinacy I am coming to; they were so obstinate they wouldn’t believe it was in the Bible at all—some averring it was one of Doctor Franklin’s famous sayings! I must give them credit for two things: first, had they known the passage to be in the Bible, I do not think the subject would have been put up for debate; second, they could not judge by experience whether it was a “root,” or not, as they were not overburdened either with money or experience.

Obstinacy leads to a great many disasters, and causes the loss of much human life. The overseers of a factory were obstinate when they would not have sufficient support to their mills; the superintendents were obstinate when they allowed trains to pass over insecure bridges; the owners of the ferry-boats were obstinate when they refused to have the boilers firm instead of being patched with a thin bit of iron, and the proprietors of the mine were obstinate when they would not have the shaft secure. And what has been the result of this obstinacy? Fallen mills, railroad disasters, ferry-boat explosions, and caving in of mines; loss of life far more precious than the loss of property, homes made desolate and a nation terror-stricken at the wanton sacrifice, and all caused by obstinacy, sheer obstinacy.

No need to draw a moral; the words bear their own moral.

F. S. F.

FICKLENESS OF POPULARITY.

THE public is fickle and ungrateful to such an extent, that one gets heartily sick of it. It is like a weathercock, only a little more variable. A person may be in favor one day, and on the next will be entirely ignored. I can well remember, a few years ago, how I, with others, attended with delight, the performance of a celebrated actress. All flocked to see and hear her. The managers throughout the country contested for her services, and he was thought a lucky man who could secure her. Whether she was as great an artist as she was said to be, it is not my province to say. I know she was acknowledged to be so at the time. Time wore on; an unhappy marriage caused her sorrow, trouble and poverty. She came back to the stage to try to recover what she had been robbed of.

Did the public call to mind the days of “Auld Lang Syne,” and again rush to the theater to show their appreciation of her talent, and aid her in her laudable cause? I am ashamed to answer my own question in the negative. Other newer and younger candidates had usurped her place, and but few remembered or cared for her.

What could have been her thoughts as she saw how the days had changed? Was it not enough to turn any one’s brain, to notice the ingratitude of the public? But, if the public had lost their gratitude, the profession had not, and her brother and sister artists gave her a substantial benefit.

There is another most worthy woman and estimable lady upon the boards, who appears in several characters in a modest and unassuming manner. To see her, you would scarcely think she ever created the furore that has attended her place, and the theater-going public do not pay her the attention which she deserves, and her own merits demand. Yet she can well remember the time when she was at the top round of the ladder of popularity, and the people took the horses from her carriage, and drew her from her hotel to the theaters, and so thick were the flowers showered upon her, that she might literally be said to walk on roses. Those things were not planned beforehand by speculating managers.

Why should these changes occur? Why is the public so ungrateful? It is because people seek novelty, and if a person be young, pretty, and has a certain dash in her, they will leave the truly talented actress out in the cold, because she has the unpardonable sin of growing old.

I have known thousands rush to see a merry little elf play Topsy, while Lady Audley would have to kill her lover to empty benches.

For years the latter had been acknowledged as one of the finest actresses in the country, but a new candidate with a good deal of vivacity and some talent, had taken the public fancy and caprice, and it was ungrateful enough to leave the old tried friends for the newly-discovered pearl.

In the years that are to come, while those who are now favorites as actors, authors, artists and lecturers, retain their popularity,

and be as much sought after as at the present time?

I think not. Then is it not advisable for those who are popular, and are in the receipt of a fine income, to be economical of it, and to lay aside enough for the hour when the public shall say, “You have amused us in the past, and you have paid you for it; you will please step aside, now, and allow us to bestow our favors upon others as we once did upon you?”

Then—if you have been saving—you can snap your fingers at their caprice, and not seem, as some persons might consider you to be, a beggar, asking for charity.

EVE LAWLESS.

Foolsap Papers.

Awful Carnage.

THE report that I was lately killed in a duel caused widespread sorrow; all the flags were at more than half-mast, and the *London Times* and other leading papers came out printed in black; but I am alive, and hope the public will bear up under this disappointment until I can give a true state of the case.

A Mr. Giggie, on reading one of my sketches remarked gratuitously that “Whitehorn didn’t always tell the truth.” Now, if there is one thing more than another or anything else that I pride myself in, it is telling the truth. Some of my truths may seem strange, but you know truth is strange—stranger than fiction. In my efforts to be precise I may sometimes tell more than the truth, but my intentions are good. They may call me a member of Congress, a lawyer, or a revenue collector; in fact they may call me anything but a liar.

When I heard that remark I felt myself getting mad; my ears flapped nervously; each particular hair of my head stood on end as if to see the show come in; my eyes rolled in their sockets wildly; I shook all over with the ague of wrath, just as if some big fellow had me by the collar of my coat and was assisting at the performance; my left hand savagely clutched an invisible head of hair, while my right fist poked awful blows just into an undiscernible face at the rate of six licks a second, with a propelling medium of sixty horse-power, while my right foot oscillated against an immaterial body like a furious sledge-hammer on the home stretch and the shop afire.

Oh, it was awful! Dear reader, be thankful you were not there to behold such terrible madness; you would have been frightened to death. I even got scared myself; I thought of the wrath of Achilles, but he was only in fun to what I was.

I was obliged to thresh the household dog before I could calm down enough to write the following furious challenge to Mr. Giggie, the first man who ever dared even to think I was a liar, much less express his views; they had to dash buckets of ice-water over me to keep me cool; my eyes flashed fire and burned frequent holes in the paper as I wrote:

“MR. GIGGIE: “Sierra.” The pure blood which for sixty centuries has circulated (according to Dr. Jenner) untarnished in the veins of the Whitehorn family, has been caused by you to mount to my cheek in the blush of shame and indignation, with a high pressure of 780 beats to the minute. Oh, that I had you before me now, with your hands and feet securely tied! How I would pitch into you with a club! My madness knows no bounds. How would I like to tramp on your dog’s tail, or throw a dew-eat into your well, or switch your little boy, or make mouths at your cook!

“Your life alone must atone for this insult. I hereby tender you the compliments of the season and challenge you to mortal combat on the tented field. Will you have the courage to meet me? I would suggest, if shot-guns are the weapons chosen, that we stand close together; the reason so many duels are failures, is that the contestants stand too far apart; therefore, I propose that we stand face to face as close as possible, with only 7865 paces between us, with our feet tied to prevent either of us getting further out of range; the guns to be loaded with bird-shot and to be aimed directly at a small piece of paper pinned on the left breast. Each to have a keg of powder, and to fire away until there is not enough left of either for a jury to sit on. Each also to have a bottle of something or other (‘other’ preferred) to use in case the proceedings get to be very dry. The man shot in the neck to be declared defeated and sent home in a tub. N. B.—No jumping behind trees.

“If sabers be the weapons, we will want to stand in arm’s reach of each other; therefore I suggest that, to give plenty of room to swing impetuous blows, we stand no further apart than seven hundred and fifty paces, secretly tied to a tree, both to prevent us from getting too close, and also from running up the tree to take undue advantage of the other. You see I want this duel carried on honorably. The surgeons to be on hand ready to sew an arm or leg on as soon and as often as they are cut off. The battle to cease occasionally to take breath and—the bottle. The seconds to pass the time away at the less-harmful game of seven-up, their earnings to go to the surviving principal.

“Neither of us allowed to halloo out unless hurt, nor to cry “enough!” unless we are pretty full.

“Confident that, if these suggestions are carried out to the letter, they will be very satisfactory to both. To pine so for your blood I know is very cruel, but I am whopping mad, and can’t think to spare you.

“I would suggest, further, that the surviving principal will have to expedite to pay the debts of the other, for I feel very sure that I won’t be killed. As we will have two seconds, I wish we could have as many minutes as we want or more.

Now, if you don’t know—Now I lay me down to sleep, you had better begin to learn it; and if you have ever cheated anybody by not returning over-change, you had better go tell them to kick you at once; and hurry, as you’ll have no time to make further reparation, and if you are told your wife you were “demanded down-town on business,” you must make an open confession to her, for you’ll never do so any more.

Your humble servant,
“WHITEHORN.”

We met—down-town.
He fell before the fifth champagne-bottle was fired; he went down forgiving me and shaking hands.

The report above alluded to sprung evidently from an imperfect understanding of this bloody affair.

WASHINGTON WHITEHORN.

“We are pleased to see that BEADLE AND COMPANY’S STAR JOURNAL has become one of the best literary sheets of the day. Among its regularly engaged writers are Mayne Reid, whose stories are always read with pleasure; Mrs. May Agnes Fleming, better known as “Cousin May Carleton”; Bruin Adams, nephew of the great hunter, “Old Grizzly”; and others of note. The paper is published at No. 98 William Street, New York.”—*Jackson (Miss.) Daily Pilot.*

Readers and Contributors.

TO CORRESPONDENTS AND AUTHORS.—No MSS. received that are not fully prepaid in postage.—No MSS. preserved for future orders.—Unavailable MSS. promptly returned only where stamps accompany the inclosure, for such return.—Book MSS. postage is two cents for every four ounces, or fraction thereof, but must be marked Book MS., and be sealed in wrappers with open end, in order to pass the mails at “Book rates.”—No correspondence of any nature is permissible in a package marked as “Book MS.”—MSS. which are imperfect are not used or wanted. In all cases our choice rests first upon merit or fitness; second, upon excellence of MS. as “copy”; third, length. Of two MSS. of equal merit we always prefer the shorter.—Never write on both sides of a sheet. The Commercial Note also paper as most convenient to editor and compositor, tearing off each page as it is written, and carefully giving it its full or page number.—A rejection by no means implies a want of merit. Many MSS. unavailable to us are well worthy of use.—All experienced and popular writers will find us ever ready to give their offerings early attention.—Correspondents must look to this column for all information in regard to contributions. We can not write letters except in special cases.

We have, for various reasons, to decline the following contributions—some of which are well worthy of use: “The Texan’s Daughter,” “Music,” “Lecturer on Wilmot’s Rites,” “Donna Regina,” “Mysterious Tramp,” etc.; “Ann Deborah’s First Speech,” etc.; “Recollections,” “Haunted House,” “False Flages,” “The Parson’s Present,” “The Crown of Lilies,” “Tomatoe’s Revenge,” “John Walte’s Bear-hunt,” “The Grand Old Indian Friendship,” “Happy at Last,” “The Sailor’s Home,” “Old Ben.”

Will find place for “Birth of Spring,” “Friendly Enemies,” “All for Love,” “Lillian’s Lace Veil,” “An Unknown Land,” “The Last Offering,” etc.

The sketches by Miss M. A. B. we will retain.

The serial, “Love’s Last Offering,” is under consideration. The sketches by the same author we shall have to decline.

We return “Haunted House,” but retain poem by same author. We are so well supplied with sketches as to be compelled to return many that are excellent.

We can make no use of the matter remitted by A. L. O. A. for reasons given in preceding paragraph.

CHARLEY CLANCY. See answer below.

AUTHOR. The series suggested would not pay. The popular papers supply that field.

MARIAN GREY. Any of the shades of lilac, light green, blue or pink. Avoid deep hues of any color, if you are especially desirous of success.

STERLING. An embrocation of glycerine, rose-leaves and borax is good for the skin darkened by tan or ill health. Good blood, however, is the chief requisite for a pure complexion.—Six cents per copy.

MISS LIZZIE DAWSON. MS. returned to you Feb. 20 is returned to us again from your post-office. We, therefore, destroy it.

S. M. K. R. Mayne Reid’s human head on the plains will speak in due season. It will be found to be a very interesting feature of this great romance, and will show the author’s constructive skill to be consummate.

W. H. M.’s story is good enough for use, but we really have no room for it. Send it to some paper less overcrowded with matter than the SATURDAY JOURNAL. This is the only one of Indian Friendship, is, like Mark Twain’s mother-in-law—in dead earnest.

C. H. P. The “Lector” may do for some of your home papers. We have no space for matter of this class, at present. Whitehorn says “paw-paw!” to you paw.

CHAPL MURLE sends stamp for a “private communication” from his business card, and no return to her letter. Her MS. is not available. We return it to her non-despatch address, San Antonio.

SUSA B. F. We return MS. The MSS. of books referred to it is not probable we could use any use for. Try some book publishers in Philadelphia.

H. A. D. The Little poem was used, supposing it would be a favor to the author to have it see the light. The poem “Recollections” we shall have to decline.

Authors who have MSS. in our hands which we have declared to be unavailable are requested to send stamps for their return. We shall soon make a general clearing out of accumulated MSS., and burn all not available.

The two MSS. by C. W. S. are very fair as compositions, but not “just the thing” for us.

TEXAS JOE. We know of no record of the fastest time made on skates, and a paper as that referred to, and a dirty affair it is.

S. M. E. T. Price for all the numbers named will be \$5.35.

“Authors must be careful to fully prepay their packages. All coming in closed envelopes must prepay at full letter rates.

ENGRAVER. Nixon, William street, New York, will supply engravers’ tools, of which there are twelve; any order will be filled; the engraving box-wood costs from \$2 1/2 to 4 cents per square inch. The engraver’s entire “kit” of tools will cost from \$9 to \$12. Good wood engravers are always in demand. Some make as high as \$10 per day.

M. O. R. The story referred to, if placed on the accepted list, probably has, for various reasons, not yet been decided. It is not lost.

MISS ESTELLE D. There must be good cause for divorce, even in India. There is no guarantee of power to obtain a divorce without a proper and sufficient cause (which causes are named by the State Statutes). If a divorce is granted on fraud or deception it is null and void, and can be set aside.

BITTER SWEET. Any good “Commercial” College in the city will answer your purpose.—The cure for pimples is to avoid grease in your diet, keep regular hours, take soap and water.

ALICE. Do not write to young men, especially not to those who are strangers. It is dangerous pleasure, believe us.

LORRIS C. If you are short in stature, you must not ruffle your dress and never, when you are short, ruffle your temper. Ruffles are becoming only to tall persons.

DOCTOR. If your hair splits at the ends, cut the ends off about once a month, and it will remedy the evil. Use a brush as well as a comb, for it makes the hair grow stronger and gives it a better luster.

LISTENER asks: “Is it impolite to look at your watch in public lecture halls, at no expense in company?” It is decidedly impolite to annoy a lecturer or minister, by looking at your watch, for were he to witness the act, he would imagine he was wearying you—in many cases, fondness the truth; but “put yourself in his place,” and you will realize how wrong it is. Regarding the looking at the time in a social gathering, and the propriety of such circumstances, of which you must be your own judge.

T. A. D. Always keep your teeth clean; it destroys the beauty of a handsome person to have yellow teeth, while a charm is added to homeliness by a set of white teeth.

CORA. If your acquaintances act coldly toward you because you are not as well dressed as they, *drop them* at once from your list, for such friends are unworthy the name. Do not run in debt to dress above your means.

VINIE R. You are not compelled to follow the fashions as regards wearing your hair. Try different methods, until you find a style becoming to you, and then stick to it.

L. STROBE. If you wish to cultivate, in your children, a gossiping spirit, talk all sorts of scandal about your neighbors, and talk over every thing pertaining to gossip you have heard. But, to cultivate such a taste is a poor beginning; it will make your children scandal-mongers—a most despicable class of people.

M. M. M. To fatten your fowls in a short time, take some ground rice, well scalded with milk, and some coarse sugar. Make it very thick. Do not give them too much, and only in the daytime.

JANE CARR. Air well your bedroom and bed-clothes daily, as there is nothing so bad for the skin, or any thing that will cause eruptions so quickly, as to let the body bathe protractedly in its own vapors.

LOUISE. Instead of saying, “Direct your letter to me,” say, “Address your letter to me.”

EMMA. To color Easter eggs, take logwood; boil for some time in water, then put your eggs in while the water is boiling. Let them stay in until colored. By tying strings around the eggs you can stripe the shells.

BRUSHES. To clean hair-brushes, wash them in water, with a little soda or ammonia dissolved in it. When cleaned, put them to dry in a shady place, standing them on the point of the handle.

FARMER. To make either champagne, take eighteen gallons of cider, three pints of spirit, five pounds of sugar, one pint of skimmed

BE MINE!

BY GERALD SILVEY.

Be mine, oh! maiden fair, be mine!
No heart hath proved more true;
Could man than me love more divine,
He'd love as angels do!

Oh, deem mine not a changeable heart,
Where man's dissemblings lie;
But let it be of thine a part,
And love shall never die.

Thou maiden! bidst thou youthful heart
To hide its early love?
Well might thou, maiden, bid depart
Thy hope in heaven above!

Thou wouldst not hide within the casket,
The jewel from the view;
Then, maiden, grant thy love, I ask it
With tender heart and true!

Cecil's Deceit:

OR,

THE DIAMOND LEGACY.

BY MRS. JENNIE D. BURTON,
AUTHOR OF "ADRIA, THE ADOPTED," OR, THE MYSTERY OF ELSFORD GRANGE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER X.
THE PICNIC.

This summer seemed rife with adventurous incident for Olive. To arrive at the climax of affairs reached at Frampton Place when Eve Collingsbrooke prosecuted her journey thither, it will be necessary to go back a week or more and take up some of the strands which made up the woof of passing events.

Frampton village and vicinity contained a number of substantial residents, solid old families that constituted the *elite* of the neighborhood. Thus there was no dearth of good society or amusement, for these all mingled with the informal intercourse which characterizes hospitable, well-to-do country dwellers; people with plenty of time for recreation, and plenty of zest for the same.

A picnic party was made up one afternoon, when the glare of the sunshine on the ripened harvest-fields and the dusty stretch of white roadway, brought the forest shadows and depths of greenery into more tempting relief.

The belt of woodland intersecting Frampton Place stretched back in a straggling line for a couple of miles, where it culminated in a dense growth of forest, much of which was yet impeded by intricacies of underbrush. The skirts of the wood were well cleared, and it was in one of the pleasantest spots that our pleasure-seekers of the day intrinched themselves.

It was a miscellaneous company, comprising a dozen different families, old and young mingling together with mutual enjoyment. Mr. Frampton had driven over in his light open carriage, crammed with provisions, and afterward gone in search of and taken bodily possession of one or two jolly old persons whose near approach to octogenarianism and encroaching infirmities had not diminished their delight in such pastime.

Cecil and Olive, accompanied by the two gentlemen, Victor D'Arno and Richard Holstead, had preferred to walk. The shaded woodpath, overarched by meeting boughs and festoons of drooping vines, held so many delights that they loitered long on the way, and it was near mid-afternoon when they came upon the assembled party.

After exchanging greetings and mingling for a time with the strolling company, Olive seated herself upon an improvised chair formed by the intertwining of tough, pliant twigs, and braced by a couple of saplings. Richard Holstead saw her there and left his place by Cecil to approach her side.

"A reward for your thoughts," he challenged her. "Are you revolving some weighty measure which has provoked such a contemplative expression?"

"I did not know that my countenance so clearly reflected my idealistic bent," she returned, "but I am in a moralizing mood. I was wondering how much of the enjoyment about us is purely real, and how much attributable to the masks people always wear."

"For instance?" he questioned.

"There is uncle Hugh, who has been buttolled by Mr. Darnley, whose hobby is agriculture. Now, uncle has no appreciation of the beauties developed in a head of cabbage or made manifest in a field of parsnips. He is being intolerably bored, yet submits with the grace of a martyr."

"Your penetration is acute, but in this instance you have failed to utilize one point in the case. Mrs. Frampton stands less than a dozen paces from the two, and while her husband appears to be bending an attentive ear to his companion's homily, his eyes are constantly wandering toward her. His civil responses, lip deep, are not interfering with the gratification he derives in seeing the influence she wields over the circle gathered around her. She is deservedly a general favorite."

Olive smiled.

"You have satisfactorily explained my uncle's complacent demeanor, but how shall you account for Mrs. Frampton's exuberant spirits? There is Percy Gray at her side, dividing his attention between his mustache and his lip; and Walter Caldwell filling up the intervals with quotations from his own poems. The remainder of the circle possess all the vanity of the one without his excessive good nature, and the self esteem and arrogance of the other without his modicum of brain to make them endurable. Mrs. Frampton's keen appreciation of the ludicrous seems lost in her thorough enjoyment of the present society."

"She is too kind at heart to wound any of the silly lads by betraying the amusement their separate foibles may afford her. She is no doubt resolved to take all the sweets that are so abundantly offered her, and too generous to fling back the bitter drops after the honey is all extracted. Now give me your ideas regarding Mr. D'Arno and the volatile little lady who is engaging his attention."

Olive glanced toward the couple indicated. Her eyes had wandered that way before, but now she studied their attitudes and expressions with renewed interest.

"You have given me a problem to solve," she said. "Sophie Darnley can be read through at a glance; a whole-souled girl, whose mischievous inclination and versatile manner often subject her to censure which her truly generous nature does not merit. See! from her pantomime I imagine that she is mimicking some one present, for the edification of herself and companion. That he is amused by her effort is evident, yet he does not appear to be giving her his undivided attention. Even when he laughs most heartily, the merriment in his face will give way unconsciously to an expression of un-

readable self-absorption. He seems to be following an undercurrent of thought which is wholly distinct from the surface of word and act betrayed. Can you catch my idea? I fear I have expressed it very imperfectly."

"It is the case with any thing we do not fully understand. Some one has said, that which we can not express in words is never a perfect idea. Our tongues will not halt except over an impotent fancy—a fact not comprehensively realized. If true, it brings home a conviction which is not calculated to feed jealous vanity; namely, how very little of even the simplest subjects our minds thoroughly master."

"And human nature is like a scroll lying open before us, the complications of which baffle our utmost efforts to follow through their windings."

"Incomprehensible to us because we are only human. Have you never been surprised at discovering some new, unsuspected phase of your own nature? Are you not often impressed by likes and dislikes for which you can give no well-based reasons? How then can we pretend to judge the world when we are enigmas to ourselves?"

"The thought may appear presumptuous, but may not outside sight prove clearer? We judge from demonstrations that we see; may not these prove more patent to us than to those from whom they originate? A mirror will reproduce nothing except actual objects placed within its angle of reflection. Are not our minds mirrors, thoughts the intangible objects pictured there, words and acts their reflection?"

"We are falling into the regular Yankee mode of argument, answering question by question. To continue it—does not that refute your theory of masks first advanced?"

"I have proved myself illogical, no doubt. To use an old simile, 'The further we go in the bog, the deeper we plunge in the mire.' I'm quite willing to take the world as it appears without searching into its possibilities."

"Yet these possibilities often prove levers which fate uses in turning our lives. I am almost tempted to decide a point in mine by a revelation which may prove premature."

A magnetic influence drew Olive's gaze to his. Her rapid glance took in every detail of his stalwart, muscular frame, his fair face stamped with the power of conscious strength, very different from the effeminacy of feature which so often marks blonde men, his bright, sweeping beard, and clear eyes looking down into hers with a searching earnestness that sent the blood in hot flushes to her cheeks, and tingling to her taper finger-ends.

What might be the possibility which fate held in store for him, Richard Holstead was not destined then to learn. A merry voice broke their *deja-vu*.

"Oh, for the gift of intuitive wisdom to discover whether your wits have gone wool-gathering!"

"It might not be apropos for wisdom to tread in the footsteps of folly, Miss Darnley," smiled Dick.

"Then you acknowledge to having said foolish things? Olive, how could you suffer it? If she was your inspiration, Mr. Holstead, I come armed with relief. I bring a summons for you. Mrs. Frampton requires your assistance in decorating the tables. Do use your influence to persuade her that the sandwiches of life are at the present moment far more essential than its roses. I am most unapologetically hungry."

Banding some light reply, Richard left them, and Olive made a place for the merry girl by her side.

"True confession ease the soul! Make me your father-confessor, Olive, and receive absolution for having monopolized the handsomest man upon the grounds. The girls are half-wild with envy."

"Not you, certainly, Sophie! I did not witness the effect of your blandishments upon Mr. D'Arno without awarding you the palm for successful coquetry. Poor Walter has been dependent entirely upon the divided mercies of Mrs. Frampton."

"Poor Walter received evident consolation," retorted Sophie, poutingly. "But I can not give you credit for your penetration. Mr. D'Arno has been successively devoted to every one in feminine shape—yourself excepted—since he made his appearance; and you owe emancipation from his attentions to your complete monopoly. Mr. Holstead has a fair base for encouragement."

"Oh, there's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream!"

"Nonsense!" cried Olive, half annoyed at this light raillery. "I should be sorry to believe that my conduct should be construed into a mark of preference, even if so strongly defined as you, hint. But, I hope you have been drawing upon your fund for exaggeration as coloring for the circumstance."

"Shades of offended dignity! what have I done?" cried Sophie, in ludicrous mock distress.

"Pierced that tender heart With a conscious dart Of its own infirmity?"

"Nothing was further from my intention, 'poor honor, give.'"

"I accept the *amende honorable*, but disclaim the application of your poetry. By the way, Sophie, have you caught the spirit of versification from Walter? His muse is prolific of such tender outbursts as you have just expressed, is it not?"

"Well, if so, he means it honestly enough, and that is better than being quizzed by such a statue of immobility as Mr. D'Arno. I didn't half the time know if he was complimenting or making sport of me."

"Ah, I thought I would induce you to take up the gantlet in defense of your old favorite," laughed Olive. "And here he comes, beaming with delight at the prospect of finding you unmattered. Let me advise you to be gracious, Sophie!"

"Advice is like medicinal drugs, best taken in small doses," Sophie declared, and with her usual perversity, turned to beckon Percy Gray to her side. But Walter, detecting her purpose, quickly forestalled it by usurping the reserved place; and in five minutes more had so won upon her favor that no shadow of restraint or ill-will marred their intercourse.

The afternoon wore on, and the sultry calm of the atmosphere changed to a fitful breeze. Gusts of air swayed the boughs, and carried messages from whispering leaves. Some floating clouds that had laid low against the horizon, gathered shape and density as they crept like darkening shadows across the sky.

A storm was brooding, and the more experienced ones among our picnic party were quick to take alarm.

"It will be a tempest," said Mrs. Darnley,

after a careful survey of the heavens. Those sharp-edged clouds that are wheeling up so rapidly, carry mischief in them. We must make haste if we wish to avoid a taste of their contents."

Thus admonished, the younger people gathered together their appurtenances, and set off on their return. The vehicles were brought round for the elders, and the grove was speedily deserted by the crowd who had lately made it resound with their light-some gaiety.

Among the last to take their departure were those from Frampton Place. Dick, having taken active part in aiding the retreat, looked around him apprehensively.

"Where is Miss Tremaine?" he asked.

"Olive?" queried Mr. Frampton. "I had forgotten the child! Eve," addressing his wife with evident anxiety, "have you seen any thing of her?"

Cecil, glancing around, caught Victor D'Arno's eye, and read the mute message it conveyed.

"She has probably gone ahead," she returned, carelessly. "She was with the Darnleys, a short time before the alarm was given."

A moment later Victor gained speech with her, unperceived.

"She did not go with the Darnleys," he asserted, half questioningly.

"No; I saw them as they left. Did I misinterpret your meaning?"

"Quite the contrary. I saw her wandering away into the woods alone, an hour ago, and am confident she did not return. Don't let them take alarm for a time. I want some such hold upon her as this opportunity may afford me—a claim to her gratitude by showing myself the only one to remember her at this crisis. You understand?"

"Yes; but will there not be danger if the storm is violent?"

"Not of consequence. You must go, now, they are waiting for you."

"Come, Eve," called her husband. "There is room for all in the carriage."

Soon they were bowling away over the smooth road, all but Cecil unconscious that Victor had purposely remained behind, and that Olive was not already on her way homeward.

When Frampton Place was reached, and it was discovered that the latter had not returned, Mr. Frampton betrayed some annoyance, but no actual apprehension.

"I suppose she has gone home with the Darnleys," said he. "It was very thoughtless of her to do so without informing us of her intention. I fear the storm will break before they reach the farm!"

Hoarse mutterings of thunder had been filling the air with their vibrations. The wind swept down in fierce gusts, sweeping loose *debris* before it, doubling the treets, and lashing them with scouring branches.

Then a calm fell—a monotonous lull which was broken by the outburst of the tempest in all its gathered fury.

The rain came down in driving sheets; lightning flashed luridly; thunder roared in peals like artillery volleys, and the dusk of early evening changed almost instantaneously into thick darkness.

Above the uproar of the storm came an imperative summons at the closed portal. The door was opened to admit the Darnleys, who were accompanied by Walter Caldwell, all breathless and excited from their race in a vain attempt to distance the violence of the storm.

CHAPTER XI.

A STRANGE BETROTHAL.

SOPHIE DARNLEY'S merry voice made itself heard above the surprised exclamations which greeted their appearance.

"Mr. Frampton, do give us credit for taking you literally by storm. We come in a sorry plight, for I must confess that the elements got the better of us, but I have too much confidence in the hospitality of your nature to imagine you will be sorry for this invasion. After all, it is far jollier than having reached the farm to be left in dull solitude for three days to come, as a result of this rain. Ugh! how it does come down."

"Welcome, Miss Sophie, whenever and however you may chance to come. But how is it that the pleasure of your presence has been so unexpectedly given us? I feared that you might not reach the farm, but thought you would certainly gain the village before the storm would break."

"You see," explained Sophie, "Walter and I were walking, and pa had taken into his conveyance all those whom he could set down on his direct way. He overtook us after having disposed of one or two passengers, and insisted upon our taking the vacant places. By the time he had stopped here and there to put down the remainder, the storm was close upon us."

"We were alone when we passed Frampton Place, and pa thought that by swift driving we might yet reach home. You would have thought him a firm devotee of the turf, could you have seen the manner in which he put old Dobbin to his best speed."

"All went well for the first quarter mile until we reached Mr. Gray's oat-field, when he became so absorbed in calculating the probable yield of that particular variety of grain per acre, that he turned us comfortably over into the gutter, and smashed a wheel during the progress."

"We took counsel together, and the result was we made all haste back to beg shelter of you, but were overtaken by the storm on the way. That, in a nutshell, is our situation."

"Since your calamity is of no more serious nature, I can rejoice over the temporary inconvenience which resulted in sending you here. But where is Olive—was she not with you?"

"Olive! Is she not here? I have not seen her since we were together in the woods."

"Where can she have gone?" queried Cecil, with an assumption of extreme anxiety. "We felt sure that she had returned with you, and experienced no alarm regarding her absence."

"She may have gone with the Grays or Boswicks," suggested Mr. Frampton.

"No; I am positive that she was not with them," Sophie declared. "She would scarcely pass Frampton Place to accompany any one to the village. Oh, Mr. Frampton!"

She broke off her words with a shudder as the alternative to which Olive might be subjected, flashed across her mind. Richard Holstead vindicated her unexpressed fear, and cried out, sharply.

"Good Heavens! Can she have been left in the forest?"

"Oh, I hope not. I sincerely hope not," said Mr. Frampton. "It would be a fear-

ful thing for her to be out alone in the night and the storm."

"I will go to the village and ascertain if she is there," Richard declared.

As he spoke there came a burst of thunder which shook the solid old house to its foundation. The rain was driven against the closed oaken shutters in volumes that would have beaten in less substantial protectors. Involuntarily they drew closer together, appalled by the war the elements were waging without.

"No, no, my boy!" Mr. Frampton interposed, as Richard made a movement to put his resolve into instant execution. "You must not venture out now if it would be madness to do so. You would only jeopardize your own safety without benefiting her. We can do nothing until the storm abates."

"And, meantime, she may be exposed to it all! No, Mr. Frampton, I can not remain idle while that consideration weighs upon me. Think of the perils surrounding her if our worst fears be true!"

Mr. Frampton groaned aloud. He knew that the tempest must be crushing down whole trees in that long stretch of forest. He could no longer attempt to dissuade Richard from his purpose.

"Then I shall accompany you," he said.

"Olive is my sister's child, and dear to me as though she were my own. While such danger threatens her I shall not remain selfishly inactive. I could never forgive myself should any harm befall her."

"I am young and hardy," Richard replied, "but you must not unnecessarily wear out your strength when it may be needed later. Alone, I can accomplish as much as if you should accompany me. If Miss Tremaine is not at the village, I will muster a company to search the wood soon as it shall be expedient to venture thither. It will be impossible to do so until the fury of the storm has passed. You will give greater aid by preparing for that emergency should it come, which I pray Heaven it may not!"

"And I," said Walter Caldwell, "am ready to go in your stead and shall insist upon doing so. Surely, Holstead, you will not refuse my services."

"Thanks," responded Dick, warmly. "But it is quite unnecessary. You will accord greater aid by preparing torches and such accessories as will be needed in searching the forest. Your own good sense will suggest what is best to be done, while I hasten to prove my devotion to our fears."

He had been enveloping himself in waterproof wrappings when he spoke, and now went out into the night, dead-black except when illuminated by the lightning flashes.

Going to the stables he equipped and led out one of the sturdy farm-horses, one all sinew and strength, slow, but endowed with the dogged persistency which will plod patiently against all odds. He mounted, and with cap drawn low upon his brow to shield his eyes from the driving rain, turned his horse's head in the direction of the village, letting the rein drop loosely upon the neck.

He could trust better to the animal's sure footing and acute instinct in the darkness than to his own judgment.

Olive was nowhere in the village. No one had seen her after the word had been given to leave the woods. Dick set his teeth and breathed hard, in his keen realization of the agony she must have endured.

Two hours later the wind sunk and the fierce thunderbursts dwindled into monotonous mutterings. It was raining still, but the fury of the tempest was spent. A party of a score of men, led by Holstead, carrying torches and axes for clearing away fallen *debris*, started for the scene of the after-dinner's pleasure. Mr. Frampton and Walter Caldwell were among the foremost, pushing on with an indefatigable zeal that would not be diminished by the obstacles they encountered.

In the midst of the excitement caused by Olive's absence, Victor had not been missed. Only Cecil sat with hands clasped in a tense strain, with a scared, drawn look on her white face that the girl's danger had not brought there.

She had been compelled by him to lend her assistance to Victor's schemes; she had tried to make herself believe that she had buried her past life beyond power of resurrection; but now, when those two were in equal peril, the girl who was destined to some time listen to the fond words—receive the endearments which had one time been the joy of her life, and the man she loved still despite her sworn allegiance to another, Cecil thrilled with a kind of fierce exultation as she told herself that she could better endure to have them both die upon that night than to see them live and mutually love.

Sophie Darnley, pacing up and down the long corridors, wringing her hands and giving hysterical vent to her expressions of grief, came to her once with her loud lamentations. But Cecil cut her short and sent her away with some sharp, reproving words. She could not endure any presence while that struggle raged in her own breast.

And, meantime, how fared Olive and the would-be claimant of her gratitude?

She had wandered away, as Victor had said, into the more intricate depths of the wood. She was neither thinking deeply upon any subject, nor yet impelled by a love of solitude. Some dreamy, half-formed fancies were floating through her brain; she was rearing castles in Spain and populating them with the embodiments of pleasant possibilities. Perhaps Richard Holstead's fair face and clear eyes formed a counterpart amid these; perhaps that revelation of his just hinted at formed a base for the up-building of a fabric light as air, and perishable as gossamer.

We all know how such sweet, idle moments will fly away with solid time. Olive was waked suddenly from her reverie by the mutterings of thunder, to find the wood enveloped in semi-obscurity caused by the gathering clouds.

She turned to retrace her steps, but after walking rapidly for a considerable distance, found, by the thickening forest growth and the broken character of the ground, that she was penetrating deeper into the wood instead of escaping from it.

She changed her direction and pressed hurriedly on, calling aloud now and then the names of her friends, and pausing to listen intently for a response. None came. The darkness settled down upon the wood like a dense pall enshrouding it.

The wind raised, and the trees above her creaked dismally as they doubled beneath it. Her vivid imagination seemed to people them with living spirits groaning aloud in torment.

Bewildered and despairing, unable longer to distinguish objects in the gloom, she sunk down upon the earth and drearily waited

for the succor which, hoping against hope, she thought might reach her.

The boughs above her quivered and grew still in the sudden calm which fell upon them. No breath of air stirred them, until, with a hoarse murmur, groaning shriller as it came, a quick gust swept over all. The forest heaved and surged like the billows of a rolling sea. Branches were torn off and hurled downward; trees were twisted through the tenacious fibers of their living trunks, and fell crashing to the ground. The clouds let loose the burden they bore, and Olive shudderingly crouched lower as the floods of heaven poured down upon her.

She had always been painfully affected by thunder-storms. Only those who have known similar nervous timidity can adequately conjecture the depth of terror she experienced in her forlorn situation. She clasped her hands tightly over her eyes to shut out the flashes of blinding light, and lay almost devoid of sense, yet conscious of keener suffering than resulted merely from her chilled, drenched frame.

The minutes dragged like hours. She had no idea of the time that had elapsed, when a sound was borne to her which was distinct from the confusion of the noisy elements.

A voice which at first seemed a delusion of her own fancy, calling her name.

"Olive, Olive, Olive!"

She struggled to her feet and tried to cry out in reply, but her voice came in hoarse murmurs, and she grew strangely faint and powerless.

Nearer and nearer came the cry: "Olive, OLIVE!"

She staggered forward, and gaining strength as she realized that it was really aid, found voice to answer.

Her faint cry was met by a triumphant shout; and Victor, trampling down the growth of scrubby brushwood, and clambering over fallen trees and branches, reached her side.

"Oh, Olive, thank God that I have found you! My darling, my love! I have found you at last!"

His arm was about her, and she nestled close to him with a feeling of relief and security that followed her late agony like the peace of heaven falling upon the purified soul released from purgatory.

"Olive, speak! You are not injured? You have escaped without harm?"

"I have not been harmed, but oh, so frightened and lonely!"

"And you are neither frightened nor lonely now, my love? Tell me, darling, that I have brought you peace and rest."

"You have brought me peace and rest," she repeated. "All my fear is gone, Victor!"

No remembrance of the afternoon and the thrill that Richard Holstead's words and looks had sent through her being came to warn her that her sense of utter peace might be no more than the natural reaction of her late overwrought faculties. And Victor, quick to embrace the advantage he had gained, drew from her the sweetest assurance which a woman can accord to the man who loves her.

Do not think her wavering or fickle! The ordeal through which she had passed was a terrible one to her; his opportune appearance had brought her a relief which she swallowed every other consideration. Moreover, this man possessed a power which he had been wont to exert unmercifully when the chance at stake was less great than at present.

He could throw a world of pathetic tenderness into his voice, a depth of earnestness into his protestations, which would carry a conviction worthy of perfect truth. So Olive, never realizing how utterly she mistook the dictates of her heart and nature, exchanged betrothal vows with that man who shared with her uncle's wife the recollection of a past which stamped him unworthy of the trust and love of a guileless soul like hers.

Through the tedious hours of the night, the searching-party prosecuted their task. Torches flashed through the intricacies of the wood; shouts resounded from point to point; but it was near dawn when the signal, caught up and echoed from side to side, told that the lost were found.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WELCOME HOME.

The spot where Olive took refuge and where Victor found her, had escaped the worst ravages of the tempest. It was in a portion of the wood made up of scrubby tangled growth, but even here some of the larger trees had been torn up by the wind.

It seemed almost miraculous that they should have escaped injury, when the devastation which the surrounding sections had sustained, was taken into consideration.

Victor, indeed, had received some slight bruises from a falling trunk which barely escaped him, during his search for the lost girl. Olive shuddered as she comprehended how imminent had been their danger.

They had walked back and forth beneath the dripping branches during the latter portion of the night. Olive was numbed and chilled, ready to succumb to the torpor brought on by her exposure and fatigue, but her companion's watchfulness preserved her from the evil effects which such submission must have entailed.

Cecil stood by the window of her own apartment while the gray dawn changed rosily before the rising sun. She had slept none during the night. The long hours dragged away while she watched, in a state which strangely intermingled mute anguish and fierce, despairing hope. Anguish over the contemplation of her own unacknowledged loss should aught befall Victor; hope, that this night's events might spare her the agony of seeing Olive his.

She could command a view of the avenue from where she stood, through the intricateacies of the foliage. She had endured the miseries of suspense through all the night, but now when the light of day seemed to promise speedy news, she shrank from learning the fate of those two who were so differently allied to her.

A moving object dotted a distant point of view. She knew instinctively that it was a messenger from the searching-party. She turned away from the window with a fierce pang tugging at her heart. What news could it bring her that would cause other than pain?

Conquering herself, she resumed her position after a moment. Soon other straggling forms came in sight, but before she could distinguish these individually, a confusion of voices and glad shouts from below assured her of what nature were the tidings brought.

She clenched her hands together in a tight grip, which left the imprint of her nails upon the palms. There had been a feeling akin to murder in her heart during the hours past, and the revolution she experienced now, was a sense of dead disappointment in knowing their safety.

She went down the stairs slowly, her face haggard in the early light, her eyes heavy-lidded, and mouth agiver with hysterical emotion. She had usually a strong control over her feelings, but she was unmoved now, more by the mental struggle she had sustained than the night's vigil.

She gave a hurried order or two to the servants for the accommodation of the men who had aided in the search. An immense fire had been kept blazing in the large kitchen all the night, and now as the villagers, drenched and weary, yet forgetting their discomfort and fatigue in joy over the happy termination of their work, came up in straggling groups of twos and threes, they were ushered into the warmth and cheerfulness of that apartment. Hot coffee, with a substantial collation such as could be served on short notice, were already under preparation.

Cecil said that the housekeeper, Mrs. Blodgett, had anticipated her own more tardy movement; and glad to be relieved from the cumbrous duties the occasion called up, she went out upon the veranda as her husband, supporting Olive, reached the steps.

Richard Holstead, silent, but attentive, walked by their side; while Victor and Walter Caldwell more slowly brought up the rear.

"Ah, Eve, we have our castaways safe enough," called out Mr. Frampton, cheerfully. "My poor girl! you look as if worried fairly ill."

"Don't mind me," replied Cecil. "I am quite well, now that I know you are all safe."

She clasped Olive's hands in her own, outstretched; and kissed her warmly, while tears welled up into her eyes and quivered upon her lashes in glittering drops.

"My dear, dear Olive! I have been so frightened for you."

Olive returned the caress gratefully, but her uncle hurried her within, saying, as he did so:

"You have good plenty of opportunity for playing the Good Samaritan, Eve. Put this willful child to bed and dose her with chamomile and tansy, or toast and coffee if she prefers. A hot bath and twenty-four hours between the blankets—do you hear the prescription, my dear?"

"I shall certainly raise no demur," Olive returned, smilingly, but with evident weariness. "It is almost an effort for me to stand."

"Which you mustn't do a second longer than is necessary," declared her uncle, peremptorily. "Sophie, my good girl, reserve that hysterical effusion for another time!"

But Sophie Darnley, flying down the stairway in the dishabille she had assumed for the night, had her arms about Olive and was laughing and crying over her in truly feminine fashion.

"Oh, you dear, poor child! Were you out in all that dreadful storm? Oh, how you must have suffered! We've been wild with apprehension, and I've imagined such horrid things. Oh! oh! oh!"

"But you see I am quite safe," Olive said, gently unclasping the other's clinging embrace.

"Yes; but I've been so terrified thinking what might be."

"There, there!" interposed Mr. Frampton, with some impatience. "Don't you suppose she realized the horrors of her situation without having them rehearsed now? Take Olive to her room, Eve; and you, Sophie, keep away till you've regained enough of common sense to be useful."

Sophie, half indignant at the reproach, subdued her hysterical inclinations and insisted upon accompanying her friend, Cecil, who had scarcely ventured a glance toward Victor, passing him, now, raised her eyes, questioning, to his face.

He answered her mute inquiry with a quiet smile of triumph. She knew then that he had gained a supremacy over the unsuspecting girl at her side, just as, years before, he had drawn from her a different and idolatrous worship. But no one saw the white shade which flashed across her face, or the rigid tension of the lines about her mouth.

Afterward, as she went softly about the room, administering to Olive's comfort, the latter followed her with grateful glance, and, with the frankness of impulse which characterized her, spoke the thought in her mind.

"I didn't know you cared so much for me, Eve!" She had learned to address her uncle's wife thus familiarly by her assumed name when alone with her. "I'm afraid I've credited you with some of that latent antagonism which is said to exist between all individual members of our sex."

"Then you have misjudged me, my dear," Cecil replied, softly. "I want you to love me and trust me as one who is most anxious for your happiness."

And Olive, sinking into slumber with a feeling of quiet contentment pervading her wearied senses, little dreamed of the bitter envy against little which rankled in the other's breast.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 107.)

Tracked to Death: THE LAST SHOT.

BY CAPT. MAYNE REID,
AUTHOR OF "HELPLESS HAND," "LONE RANCHER,"
"SCALP HUNTERS," "WHITE CHIEF," ETC.

CHAPTER XLIV.
THE HAND OF GOD.

THERE is no province in Spanish America without its "Colorado" river. The word signifies "colored with a tinge of red," and is applied to streams having this peculiarity. In Mexican territory—or what was once Mexican—there are several such streams. There is the great Colorado of the West, celebrated for its canonized channel, with banks rising a mile vertically above its bed; the Colorado, or Red Fork of the Arkansas; and the Colorado of Texas; with several others less known to general geography.

South America has also, in one place or another, half a score of streams bearing this synonym, so little distinctive.

In the case of the Texan Colorado the title is a somewhat ludicrous misnomer, bestowed by the Anglo-American settlers through a misapprehension of Spanish maps. The stream so called by the Spaniards was the present Brazos—more proper-

ly Brazos de Dios—while this, in turn, was the Colorado. The misconception that must have led to this transposal of names is all the more remarkable from the fact that the Texan Colorado is in reality a clear-water stream, times of freshest excepted; while the Brazos is a muddy river, with the red-ocher tint usually termed "Colorado."

Regarding the river now bearing the latter name as the real Brazos de Dios, there is a romantic chapter of history connected with its bestowal. I may briefly cite the episode, since it has a topographical bearing on certain incidents now to be recounted. It is well known that Texas was first colonized by the Spaniards, on what may be called the "missionary system." Monks were sent into this province, carrying the cross in one hand, with soldiers at their back bearing the sword. Missions were founded in a sort of monastical style, with dwellings for the padres who founded them, churches for the Indians to be Christianized. Near by a barracks, or soldiers' quarters, was established, bearing the title *presidio* or garrison. Both *missiones* and *presidios* were generally fortified; and with that keen out-look toward temporal enjoyment, which at all times and in all countries has characterized these spiritual teachers, their place of abode was chosen with an eye to the utile and comfortable, as also the picturesque. The mission buildings were on a magnificent scale—mansions, in short—with grand dining-halls, snug sitting and sleeping-chambers, well-paved courts, and often spacious gardens attached.

There was no great difficulty in the Fathers thus handsomely housing themselves. Their new-made neophytes did all the work for the sake and in the name of the "Holy Faith," into which they had been inducted. The toil of the red-skinned converts did not cease on their having finished building the church and mission-house. It was then transferred to the tillage of the surrounding fields, and continued throughout their whole lives; not for their own benefit, but to enrich these idle and lazy friars, who were in many cases men of the most flagitious character. It was, in fact, a system of slavery, based upon the love of religious fanaticism. Instead of civilizing the aborigines of America it but brutalized them the more, by eradicating from their hearts whatever of savage virtue they had, and implanting in its place the worst form of bigotry and direct shape of superstition.

Most American writers, who speak of these missionary establishments, have formed an erroneous estimate of them; and, what is worse, have given it to the world. Many of these writers are, or were, officers in the United States army, sent to explore the wild territories in which the missions existed. Having received their education in Roman Catholic seminaries, they have been inducted into taking a lenient view of the doings of the "old Spanish padres." Hence their testimony favorable to the system.

The facts are all against them. These show that it was a system of *encomienda*, more oppressive than the European serfdom of the Middle Ages. Its issue is sufficient proof of this. It was falling to pieces long before the Anglo-Saxon race showed itself on the territory where it had once flourished. The missions were in a state of decadence, their buildings going to decay; while the red man, disgusted at the attempt to enslave under the cloak of Christianizing him, had returned, or was rapidly returning, to his idolatry, as to his roving life.

One of these missions had been established on the San Saba river—a beautiful stream, tributary to the Colorado of Texas. For a considerable time it had held a prosperous existence, and numbered among its neophytes many Indians of the *Lipano* and *Comanche* tribes.

But the tyranny of the monkish missionaries, by their exactions of tithes and almost continued toil—themselves living in luxurious ease, and without much regard to that continence they inculcated—at length provoked their new-made converts to revolt. In which they were aided by those Indians who had remained unconvinced, and still heretically roamed around the neighborhood.

The consequence was that on a certain day when the hunters of the *presidio* were abroad, and some expedition of the *padres* outside idolaters, in league with the disaffected converts, entered the mission buildings, with arms concealed under their ample cloaks of buffalo-skin. After prowling about for a while in an insolent manner, they at length, at a given signal from their chief, attacked the proselytizing *padres*, with those converts who adhered to them, tomahawking and scalping all who came in their way.

It is but the old story of Indian retaliation to say that the women and children were massacred along with the men.

One of the monks escaped by stealing off at the commencement of the slaughter—a man of great repute in those early times of Texas. He succeeded in making his way down the valley of the San Saba, keeping the right bank of the river. But to reach an asylum of safety it was necessary for him to cross the greater stream to which the San Saba is tributary—the Colorado. In this there was a fresher at the time; and its current was so swollen that neither man nor horse could have forded it.

The *padre* stood upon its bank, looking covetously across, and listening in terror to the sounds heard behind him. These were the war-cries of the pursuing Comanches.

For a moment the monk believed himself lost. But, thus then, the arm of God was extended to protect him. It was done in a fashion somewhat difficult to give credence to, though easy enough for believers in the Holy Faith. It was a mere miracle; not stranger or more apocryphal than we hear of every day in France, Spain, or Italy. The only singularity about the Texan miracle was the fact of its not being original; for it was a pure piracy from Sacred Writ—that passage of it relating to the apocryphal crossing of the Red Sea by Moses and his Israelites.

The Spanish monk stood on the river's bank, his eyes fixed despairingly on its deep, rapid-running current, which he knew he could not cross without the danger of his being drowned. But just at this crisis he saw the waters separate, the current becoming suddenly stayed, and the pebbly bed showing dry.

Tucking up his gown under his girdle, he struck into the channel, and, no doubt, making good time—though the history does not speak of this—he succeeded in planting his sandaled feet dry-shod on the opposite shore!

So far the Texan legend corresponds with that of the Red Sea. Beyond, the incident, as related, is slightly different. Pharaoh's following host was overwhelmed by the closing waters. The pursuing Comanches did not so much as enter the charmed stream, which had already filled up again. They were found next morning upon the same shore where they had arrived in pursuit, all dead, all lying at full stretch along the sword, with their heads turned in the same direction, like trees struck down by a tornado.

Only the Omnipotent could have done this. No mortal hand could have made such a coup. Hence the name which the Spaniards bestowed upon the river, *Brazos de Dios*—literally, "the arm of God." Hence also the history, or rather fable, intended to awe the minds of the rebellious converts, and restore them to Christianity, or serfdom; which it did not, since from that day the mission of San Saba remained a ruin.

It was to this desolate spot—which had no need to be desolate, since it was fertile, picturesque, possessing all the advantages required for a prosperous settlement—that Colonel Armstrong intended conducting his colony. His future son-in-law—a sort of Cæsar, as described—had purchased a large tract of territory around the deserted mission, the buildings of which, still standing, only needed some repairs to convert them into a comfortable dwelling-place.

There, more than a century before, the monks had made halt, with the cross held conspicuously in one hand, and the sword secretly carried in the other.

Now approached the same spot a new invasion—but of the ax and rifle—neither ostentatiously paraded, but neither periciously concealed.

CHAPTER XLVI. THE PRAIRIE SEA.

A RIVER running through meadows, on which scythe of mow has never cut sword, nor haymaker set foot; meadows loaded with such luxuriance of verdure—greenest, tallest grass—that tons of hay might be garnered off a single acre; meadows of such extent that in speaking of them you may not use the words acres, but miles, and even this will but faintly convey an idea of their immensity.

To the seeming they have no boundary save the blue sky; no limit nearer than the horizon. And since to the eye of the traveler this keeps continually changing, he may well believe they have no limit at all, and fancy himself moving over the surface of a green sea, boundless as ocean itself, his horse being the boat in which he has embarked.

In places this extended surface presents a somewhat monotonous aspect, though this is not so everywhere. Here and there it may be seen pleasantly interspersed with trees, some standing solitary, but mostly in groves, copses, or belts, these looking for all the world, like islands in the ocean. So perfect is the resemblance, that this very name has been given them, by men of Norman and Saxon race, whose ancestors, having crossed the Atlantic, carried into their colonies many ideas of the mariner, with much of his nomenclature. To them the isolated groves are "islands," larger tracts of timber, seen afar, are "land," narrow spaces between are "straits," and indentations along the edges "bays."

To carry the analogy further, the herds of buffalo, with bodies half buried in the tall grass, might be likened to "schools" of whales; the wild horses to porpoise at play; the deer to dolphins; and the fleet antelopes to flying-fish.

Completing the figure, we have the vultures soaring above, performing the part of predatory sea-gulls; the eagle representing the rarer frigate-bird, or albatross.

In the midst of this verdant expanse, less than a quarter of a century ago man was rarely met; still more rarely civilized man, and rarer yet his dwelling-place. If at times he appeared among the prairie groves, he was not there as a sojourner; only a traveler, passing from place to place. The herds of cattle, with shaggy frontlet and humped shoulders; the droves of horses, long-tailed and with full flowing manes; the proud antlered stags, and prong-horned antelopes were not his. He had no control over them. The turf he trod was free to them for pasture, as to him for passage; and as he made way through their midst, his presence scarce frightened them. He might boast of being "war's arbiters," and lords of that great ocean, the stretches between the Sabine river and the Rio Grande; civilized man had as yet but shown himself upon its shores.

Since then he has entered upon and scratched a portion of it, though not much, compared with its immensity of surface. There are still grand expanses of the Texan prairie unfurrowed by the plowshare of the colonist, almost untrodden by the foot of the explorer. Even at this hour the traveler may journey for days on grass-grown plains, amid groves of timber, without seeing house, or so much as a chimney peering above the tree-tops. If he perceive a solitary smoke curling skyward he knows that it is over the camp-fire of some one, a wayfarer like himself.

And it may be above the bivouac of men he would do well to shun. For upon the green surface of the great prairie sea, as upon the blue expanse of the ocean, all men met with are not honest. There he land-sharks as well as water-sharks—prairie-pirates as well as corsairs of the deep.

Something bearing resemblance to a band of such freebooters might have been seen moving over one of the prairies of Western Texas, about a month after Colonel Armstrong and his colonizing expedition took departure from the town of Natchitoches.

There were in all about twenty of them, mounted upon mustangs—the wild horses of Texas—though two or three rode larger and better stock, the breed of the States. These last must have been stolen; for when an Indian is seen bestirring an American horse it is safe to come to this conclusion.

They appeared to be all Indians. Or, if there was a white man among them, he must have been sun-tanned beyond any thing commonly seen. In addition to their natural tint of burnt amber, they were all glaringly painted; their faces variously streaked and escutcheoned with chalk-white, charcoal-black and vermilion. As for their bodies, not much of them could be seen. Blankets of blue and scarlet, with buffalo-robbers, and buck-skin shirts shrouded the limbs, moccasins encased their feet. In addition to their dress, they wore the usual Indian adornments. Dyed eagle-plumes

stood, tuft-like, out of their raven-black hair; which, falling in long tresses, swept back to the hips of their horses; while strings of peccaries' teeth and claws of the grizzly bear were suspended around their necks in bountiful profusion.

It is true, this was not a correct fighting costume. Nor would their toilet have betokened them on the war-trail. But the Texan Indian does not always dress warrior-fashion when he goes forth on a predatory excursion. More rarely when it is a mere plundering maraud directed against some frontier settlement, or traveling party of whites. On such occasions he does not intend fighting, but rather shuns it. And, as thieving is his preferred game, he can steal just as adroitly in a buck-skin hunting-shirt as with bare arms.

These numbered too few for a war-party. At the same time, their being without weapon bespoke them on no errand of peace, nor honesty. But for the arms they carried they might have been mistaken for traders. They had spears and guns, some of them "bowie" knives and pistols. The Indian hunter still believes in the efficacy of the silent arrow. On not one of these was seen either bow or quiver.

There were other signs about them which the ordinary traveler would not understand as suspicious; but which to the eye of an old prairie-man would be intelligible enough. Such a one would at once have pronounced them a band of *prairie pirates*, and of the most dangerous kind encountered on the plains of Texas. To what tribe they belonged the sequel will show.

CHAPTER XLVII. PRAIRIE PIRATES.

THE time at which this painted cohort could have been seen has been stated, approximately. It was about a month after Colonel Armstrong, with his emigrants, had crossed the Sabine into Texas.

The place remains to be particularized. It was near the confluence of the two famed Texan rivers already made known to the reader—the San Saba and Colorado; where the former, after meandering through verdant meadows—one of the most beautiful prairie expanses in Texas—glides softly, like a shy bride, into the arms of the latter, and stronger-flowing stream.

The Indians were upon the left side of the San Saba, some miles above its mouth. But not on the river's bank, nor in any part of its wide valley—there termed "bottom-land."

They were moving along the upland and more sterile tract, which, rising terrace-like above the river valley, presents a steep facade toward it, almost throughout its whole course.

On each side of almost every Texan stream, one or more of these cliff-like escarpments rise over the level of the bottom-land; their crests being but the termination of plains, that extend back to an indefinite distance, or until they reach a similar stair descending into the valley of some other water-course.

Thus it is with the San Saba; the bluff elevation on its left or northern bank being but the abrupt ending of a plateau, that stretches across the angle between it and the Colorado.

Along the edge of this the Indian band was moving; for, as already said, it was in motion, the men composing it being mounted, and riding onward. They were going on at a slow pace, and keeping at some distance back from the crest of the escarpment; so far, that they could not have been seen from any part of the river bottom below.

One of them, who was on foot, pursuing a parallel line, and closer to the cliff edge, could command a view of the valley, without danger of being himself seen from it. This one was making his way, crouchingly, among the dwarf cedar-trees that grew upon the upper plain.

At short intervals—every twenty minutes or so—the skulker passed out, and made some communication to the horsemen; who halted to hear. Then he would return to the cliff edge, and continue on as before.

This odd movement was of itself sufficient to throw suspicion on the character of the horsemen—almost declaring their design. They could only be observing a party of travelers, with the intention of waylaying them.

And a party of travelers it was. Below, in the San Saba bottom—afar off, though still on the nether side of the stream—could be seen a number of white objects, resembling canvas tents set in a row. It required a prolonged observation to tell they were not this, as also that they were in motion. For they were so; though moving as slowly as a train of siege artillery.

It could just be seen that they were wheeled vehicles; distinguishable as wagons by their white canvas tilts—the latter contrasting with the surface of grass green over which they were making way. Slowly crawling along, they bore similitude to a string of gigantic *termites* on some industrial excursion.

Once made out, there could be no mistaking the nature of the spectacle. They who viewed it from the bluffs evidently understood it. A train of emigrant settlers, en route to the place of intended settlement.

Who composed this migrating party, the reader will not need to be told. He will already have guessed them to be Colonel Armstrong and his colonizing confederates. They were.

It was a train unusually large—twenty wagons or more, with its proportion of people—men, women, and children. The forms of at least forty horsemen could be made out, riding in front, in rear, and alongside of it.

No wonder the twenty painted pirates, who pursued the parallel route along the cliff, were taking care not to approach it too nearly. One would suppose, that from such a strong traveling party their chance of obtaining plunder would be a slight one.

They did not appear to think so. For as the emigrant train tardily crept on up the valley, they too moved along the upper plain, and at a like rate of speed, their scout keeping the wagons in sight, and at intervals making, admonishing them of every movement made by the travelers.

At certain points, where a thicker and taller growth of timber favored the horsemen's approach coming nearer to the cliff edge, the whole band would ride up to it and take a look at the wagon-train. Then they would survey it with eyes in which could be read a hungry conceit likely to go far and risk much to be appeased.

Now clustered upon the cliff, now moving onward, again to make a halt, the plumed and painted savages resembled a flock of vultures hovering above a drove of cattle or herd of deer, as if expecting some

of their number to be by chance disabled and become easy prey.

At a point where the wagon-train was compelled to make crossing of the river—the only fording-place for many miles—the Indians seemed to watch it with increased eagerness, as if they had some thought of their attacking it.

If so, they allowed the opportunity to pass. One after another the wagons went across, and were for a time lost among the trees that bordered the river's bank. Soon after they reappeared, the line extended as before, continuing on up the valley.

And the pirates also kept on, now not only the bluff, and half the river bottom, but the river itself, separating them from the travelers, on whose skirts they had been hanging since the earliest hour of dawn.

And they still kept on watching the emigrant-wagons until the sun sunk low—almost to the horizon. Then the prairie pirates halted upon a spot thickly beset with cedar-trees; a sort of promontory of the upper plain that projected over the river valley, and commanded a view of it for miles.

On its opposite side they could see the wagons slowly crawling along. But now not all of them were in motion. Those in the lead had stopped, the others doing likewise, as, successively, they arrived at the stopping-place.

This was in front of a building, just discernible in the dim distance, and only half visible, its other half screened by surrounding trees. The part seen was a mass of mason-work, dark in hue, quadrangular in shape, almost windowless, with a crenelled parapet cresting its facade. Contiguous rose a tower, topped with something that resembled a belfry. About both there was that look betokening neglect, or non-habitation; in short, the aspect of a ruin.

They who stood regarding it from afar needed not to be told the character of the building, or what it was. They knew it to be the old mission of San Saba.

And they who were nearer to it knew the same.

The emigrants, as they approached the place, coming up one after another, and making stops before its walls, were full of high hopes. Their hearts were joyous, their voices gleeful. They had reached the goal of their journey.

For weeks the San Saba mission had been the topic of their discourse, the theme of almost hourly converse. They would re-people the deserted dwellings; restore it to its original strength and splendor; once more bring its long-neglected fields into tillage; and make fortunes out of them by the cultivation of cotton.

There was no cloud to darken the horizon of their future. The long, difficult journey had been accomplished; and rejoicingly they now hailed its termination. The head of their wagon-train had already made halt in front of the dilapidated old building, soon to be restored to the comforts, if not the uses, of yore.

So thought they, in full confidence of the future.

But while they were thus thinking, the prairie-pirates, perched upon the far-off bluff—watching the wagons, as one after another drew up to be dislodged—indulged in a different forecast of that future. They had a design of their own, fixed and determined on. If they should succeed in carrying it into execution, the old mission of San Saba might still remain a ruin.

CHAPTER XLVIII. THE SAN SABA MISSION HOUSE.

THE ancient mission building of San Saba, erst the abode of Spanish monks, now become the dwelling-place of the *ex-decent* Mississippi planter, calls for some words of description.

It stood on the right side of the river, several hundred yards from its bank, upon a platform slightly elevated above the general level of the plain.

The site had been chosen for three distinct reasons—the first, sanitary; the second, on account of the fine prospect it afforded; and the third, to avoid the danger of inundation when the river was in flood.

In architectural style the mission-house itself did not differ greatly from what may be seen in most Mexican haciendas.

It was a grand quadrangular structure, with an uncovered court in the center—the *patio*. Around this ran a gallery, the common way or corridor, upon which opened the doors of the different apartments.

Only a few windows looked outside; these being casements, unglazed, but protected against ingress by a grille of strong iron bars set vertically—the *reja*. In the center of its facade was a double door, of jali-like aspect, when open giving admittance to the passage termed *segway*. Both doorway and passage were of sufficient capacity to admit a wagon with its load, though intended only for coaches similar to that Sir Charles Grandison used to ride in. Vehicles of this exact size and pattern may be seen to this day rolling, or rather crawling, along the country roads of what was once New Spain—relics of its luxurious grandeur long since gone.

Behind the *patio* a second passage-way gave entrance to another and larger courtyard, devoted to stables, store-rooms, and other domestic offices. Still further back an inclosure of nearly an acre in extent was the *huerta* or garden. This, surrounded by a high wall of adobe, or sun-baked bricks, crested with a *chacal-de-frise* of spinous cactus plants, was filled with fruit and flowering trees. These, once carefully cultivated, but for a long time neglected, now covered the walk in wild luxuriance. Under their shade, silently trading with sandaled feet, or reclining on rustic benches, the *padres* used to spend their idle hours—perhaps as pleasantly as their British brethren of Bolton Abbey. Often did the mission walls echo their "Ha, ha!" as they quaffed the choicest vintage of Xeres, and laughed "Ha, ha!" at such jests as Texas and its red-skinned aborigines afforded them.

The mission dwelling-house was but one story in height, with a flat roof and parapet running around its outer edge; the latter giving it greater apparent elevation.

Near by stood the *capella*, or chapel, a structure of more imposing appearance from having a tower and belfry—both *leaved* from long neglect, while at some distance off was the *rancheria*, or collection of mud huts, in which dwelt the Indian converts attached to the mission. These were screened from view of the main building by a thick grove of evergreen trees; the *padres* not relishing a too close contact with their half-naked neophytes.

Some of the huts still standing, and in a tolerable state of repair, offered a shelter to

the colonizing companions of Colonel Armstrong, most of whom had taken up abode in them. They were only to serve as temporary residences, until they could build better houses. There was no time for this now. The spring was on, and the cotton-seed must be got into the ground, without thought of any thing else.

It need scarcely be told that the colonel himself, with his family and house-servants, occupied the old mission building; and equally superfluous to add that it also gave lodgment to Louis Dupre and his belongings. The young Louisiana planter was now looked upon as one of the Armstrong family. It only wanted a word from some one in holy orders to make him so; and there chanced to be such a one among the party of colonists, a clergyman brought along to complete its organization. The grand event was but deferred, until the cotton-seed should be safe under the soil. Then there would be a day of jubilee, to eclipse any thing ever seen upon the San Saba; in splendor to exceed the grandest ceremonial the monks, celebrated for such exhibitions, had ever got up, or attempted.

But business before pleasure was the adage adopted for the hour; and, after a day given to rest—or, rather, to unpacking—the real work of colonizing had commenced. Then the little painted plows brought along were set to soiling their paint, by turning up the fertile clod of the San Saba valley, that had so long lain fallow; while the seed of the famed gossypium, still showing some of the staple attached, despite the "ginning" it had received, was being scattered far and wide over hundreds—ay, thousands—of acres.

Around the old mission of San Saba was now inaugurated a new life, with its scenes of busy industry, quite as stirring as those presided over by the "monks of old," perhaps surer of success, and more likely to be permanent.

Even the happy-like band that had hung upon the skirts of the emigrants, as these approached the end of their journey, seemed no longer to threaten the scheme of colonization.

Indeed, the behavior of the Indians had in it something very eccentric, and comprehensible only to themselves. After remaining upon the projecting point of the bluff, until the last of the wagons was unhitched, and stood motionless before the mission walls—viewing them like vultures deprived of a carrion-feast—the savages remounted their horses, and rode off in the direction of the Colorado. Nor did they again make halt until they had struck a creek tributary to the latter stream, where half a dozen huts, wigwam pattern, standing in a grove of pecan trees, appeared to be their permanent camping-place.

Whether they intended returning to the prey that had escaped them, could only be known to themselves. They left no sign to tell of their intention.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 97.)

The Red Mazeppa:

OR,
THE MADMAN OF THE PLAINS.

A STRANGE STORY OF THE TEXAN FRONTIER!

[THE RIGHT OF DRAMATIZATION RESERVED.]

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "OVERLAND KIT," "WOLF DEMON," "A CASE OF SPADAS," "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

OVER the prairie, circling to the north of the hacienda of Bandera, rode Gilbert, the Mustang, and the border lion, Davy Crockett.

The crescent-shaped moon was high in the heavens, the hour of nine at hand, and the prairie silent as the Mission grave.

The horseman gained the road that ran by the side of the Sego.

The glimmering light of the moon danced in a thousand ripples on the bosom of the sluggish tide.

A half-mile to the south the walls of the hacienda of the Mexican loomed up a black mass against the sky.

By a little clump of cactuses, close to the river's bank, the two Americans drew rein.

"We had better not approach too near to the house, else our presence may be discovered by some of the dogs," Gilbert said.

"At the damned curs have a white man wuss than a Digger Indian does clean water. They'd yelp like all-possessed if they got a smell on us," Crockett remarked.

"Will you remain here and see to the horses, while I scout in to the house?"

"Sart'in—in course I will, if you think it best."

"Yes, I do," Gilbert replied. "Even if I am discovered by any of the inmates of the house, your presence would not aid me, for the only course to pursue in such a case would be to retreat at once."

"That's correct, sure as shootin'! An' ef we did leave the brutes, some cussed yallerbelly might stan' 'em, then we'd be in a nice fix. I reckon, though, that any 'greaser' would stand a right peart chance of gittin' the hull top of his head-piece kicked off ef he come within reach of Jerusalem's heels."

"I'll go on at once, for it must be near nine."

"Co-ret; never keep a gal waitin'; it worries the leetle dears, an' rifles their dispositions wuss than a 'nortlier' does a puddle of dirty water."

The Mustanger dismounted.

"I shall not be gone long," and with this parting speech Gilbert stole away into the darkness.

"I reckon when a feller is a-talkin' with the gal he hankers arter, that time slips away 'bout as lively as a scart 'coon goes by a holler tree, muttered Crockett, as he watched the gloom gather and thicken around the main form of the Mustang.

Then Crockett carefully surveyed the ground around him. On one side, the river; on the other, the open prairie; before him, the hacienda of Bandera, surrounded by clumps of timber; in his rear, the open plain, stretching afar off to the giant hills where melted the snow that fed the Sego's stream.

"Feel kinder juberome—kinder like an old tom-cat, with a big bull-dog arter him," Crockett soliloquized. "Reckon that ain't any danger, but jest as lief I w'n't hyar. Don't like night, any way; only fit for coyotes and nigger babies. I reckon I've got a touch of ague, 'cos that's a cold chill dancin' a Virginian reel down my back bone."

Crockett shivered, yet the breeze, borne along on the bosom of the night, was balmy

and mild, laden with the sweet odors of the flowery prairie.

With a sudden movement Crockett dismounted. On the ground he shook himself together, as he would have expressed it; then he stepped forward, and rubbed his cheek against the nose of the mustang, who switched his tail around in delight at the caress.

"Soho! you big-souled, long-eared son of a streak of greased lightning!" exclaimed the borderer, patting the neck of the horse, kindly. "You ain't handsome to look at, but I reckon that handsome is as handsome does. You don't smell any thing wrong, do you?" And, as if in answer to the question, the mustang stuck his head down, and pretended to bite the hand that held its rein.

"No yaller greaser nor painted Injun sar-pint crawlin' round, hey? I reckon I'd trust your nose ag'in my eyes, every time." Then, to the astonishment of the woodman, the mustang suddenly raised his head, laid back his ears, and stuck his nose out straight in the air.

"Danger, by hokey!" Crockett muttered, loosing the pistol in his belt; the long rifle was slung across his back.

The mustang shook his head, tossed his mane, and betrayed other signs of uneasiness.

"Injuns!" muttered Crockett, gazing around, anxiously. "The leetle cuss never made a mistake yit, an' he says Injuns now, just as plain as kin be. What on yearth brings 'em in so near to the settlement? 'Taint the Mexican moon yit, either. I reckon I'm in a fix, hyar, as the b'ar said when he poked his nose into a beehive."

Then the sound of a light footfall came to the startled ears of Crockett. Quietly he thrust the pistol back into his belt. The keen ears of the woodman had told him that there was but one approaching.

"I reckon that I kin knife this critter without his howling much, ef I have to do it," he muttered.

The broad-bladed hunting-knife was gripped in the muscular hand of the Indian-fighter; great danger for the coming foe, for the great black bear of the Tennessee canoe had gone down writhing in death at a single blow of the glistening steel.

Then, through the gloom of the night, came a shadowy form, stealing forward with the craft and caution of the wildcat.

Crockett, crouching beneath the shadow of the cactuses, nerved himself for the coming encounter.

Gilbert proceeded onward with noiseless steps. Swiftly he glided forward. More and more distinct the walls of the hacienda rose before him.

At last the Mustang paused and glanced around him cautiously.

"I must be near the appointed place," he muttered.

Then as he stood deliberating, from the shadow of a clump of trees, a dark-robed figure advanced toward him.

A second more and Giralda was in his arms.

What joys like those of pure, true love? Beneath the shelter of the thorny branches the lovers sought concealment.

"Have you waited long for me?" Gilbert asked.

"No, only a few moments. I feared that you might mistake the place."

"Love gave eyes to pierce even this darkness," the Mustang replied, fondly caressing the soft locks of the Mexican maid.

"Oh, Gilbert, I have acted so boldly with you. If you could see my face, you would see how low the blood flushes my cheeks with shame. I can not understand what has made me pursue such an unmaidenly course. I never did any thing like it before in all my life. I am so afraid that you will think badly of me."

"Think badly of you, dear, true-hearted girl that you are; if I should live to a hundred years, in all that time I should never find hours enough to bless the act which told me that my love was not a hopeless passion."

"You make me so happy!" and the glad tears of joy flooded the great, black eyes of the girl as she nestled her head down on the breast of her lover, the darkness concealed her agitation. The hunchy Mexican girl, cold as a marble statue, stately as a pinyon tree, possessing the strange reserve that kept all at a distance and forbade near approach, was now, melted by the influence of the master-passion, as tender as the rosebud, and as full of fire as the glowing coal.

Strange change! Who shall deny the power of love?

"And you have made me so happy!" the Mustang exclaimed, pressing a low, soft kiss upon the pure, white forehead.

"You love me," she murmured, lowly.

"Yes," he answered, tenderly pressing the rounded form still closer to him.

For a moment there was silence; then Giralda suddenly raised her head and rested it on the shoulder of the Mustang.

"Do you think that I am pretty?" she asked in a shy, soft voice.

"Yes, very pretty!" he answered.

Softly she pressed her cheek against the bronzed face of Gilbert.

"I am so glad that you think so," she murmured, gladly. "I do not care what any one else thinks, but I do want you to think that I am pretty."

"Giralda, sometimes I fear that I shall never be able to win you; you alone favor my love," Gilbert said, earnestly.

"You have won that love; for your sake I will give up home, friends, all, and follow you throughout the world."

With a long, sweet kiss Giralda sealed her pledge.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SURPRISE.

BANDERA sat alone in his chamber. The long white candles burning in the massive golden candlesticks cast a wavy, uncertain light throughout the room.

The Mexican was seated in an arm-chair by the center-table, facing the lighted candles. His hand was toying nervously with his silken beard, and the deep wrinkles, that told of busy thought, lined his massive brow.

"It must be near nine," he muttered, communing with himself, for the owner of the hacienda was alone. "In a few minutes more my second blow will take effect. The path seems clear before me, excepting one obstacle only. Strange, how curious are the ways of fate. No sooner do I sweep one menacing hand aside than a second springs from the air and threatens a blow."

This adventurer, who would have foreseen that he would appear? no one! Yet he does come; he threatens, and again I strike. Again my path is clear, when, as if by ma-

gic, or called up by some devil from the shades below, this herdsman steps forward, and again I see the upraised hand ready to strike. Will peace never come? Must all my life be spent in committing new crimes to hide the traces of the old one? Bandera is mine. One blow gained it, but it has taken two to retain it; and now I see the necessity for a third."

The old Mexican started from his chair and paced up and down the room, strangely excited.

"Mexico is wide!" he muttered, as he walked restlessly to and fro. "What demon prompted this herdsman to come here, or is it my good genius that has sent him, so that I may have the chance to crush the only creature who can dispute my right to these broad prairies? Another blow! and so I said before. When the first thought came into my mind that I might seize the estate, I said, 'a single blow and all is mine.' The blow was struck, success crowned the effort; years go by, and then, suddenly, fate puts a fresh opponent into the field. Another blow, another success; then days—not years, or even weeks—and another comes; I sweep him aside, and in his place there comes a third. What says the fable of the ancient hydra? no sooner is one head destroyed, than in its place springs another."

Fiercely the Mexican shut his white teeth together, and with knitted brow walked up and down.

A low tap at the door interrupted his meditation. In obedience to his command a herdsman entered the room; a wily-looking little Mexican, with a glimmer of low cunning in his dark eyes.

The herdsman was one of Bandera's trusted men, and had received instructions that night to watch the footsteps of Giralda.

"The senorita has gone out," the herdsman said.

"Yes."

"And she has taken the road leading up the river."

Bandera looked astonished; he had counted upon Giralda proceeding toward Dianis.

"Perhaps after a while she may proceed in some other direction," the old Mexican said, slowly.

"It is not likely, senor, for I followed her until she reached a clump of cactuses about half a mile from here, by the river's bank, and there she waited."

Bandera saw at once that instant action must be taken, else the American would escape the snare which had been laid for him, for the Mexican doubted not that Giralda had stolen forth to meet her lover.

The father was quick to act.

"You have done well," he said, slowly; "you are sure that she did not discover that she was watched?"

"Yes, senor," the herdsman replied, quickly; "a snake could not have glided over the ground more noiseless than I."

"Remember my caution: do not mention this matter to any one."

"I shall remember; the senor can depend upon me," and with a low bow the herdsman withdrew.

Bandera seized his sombrero and cast his serape over his shoulder.

"Dago and his men are ambushed below the hacienda, cursed luck! The American dog may escape us, after all!"

Then Bandera seized a pair of pistols that were on the center-table, together with a broad-bladed knife. The weapons he thrust into his girdle, and left the room.

He proceeded straight to the open air.

Outside the gate the Mexican halted and cast a glance upward at the sky. A smile of satisfaction spread over his gloomy face as he noted the darkness of the night.

"The very night for our purpose," he muttered. "If that foolish girl will only hold him in soft dalliance for a half-hour or so, I would not give a golden ounce for the American's chance to escape with life. Now for my men. They can not be far from here."

With rapid strides Bandera hastened down the road which followed the winding course of the Sego.

Ten minutes' walk and he halted; before him was a little clump of timber, the scrubby trees looking like so many weird specters, standing forth outstretched arms and flowing robes in the gloom.

"The very spot that Dago would select for an ambush, or I mistake my man," Bandera said, as he peered forward into the darkness.

Then he imitated the low cry of the nightingale.

Hardly had the quivering note died on the air when an answer came from the clump of timber.

"They are here!" Bandera exclaimed, and he at once proceeded onward.

As soon as he entered the shadowy gloom which enveloped the timber with a somber mantle, Michael Dago rose from his concealment in the bushes.

"It is I—Bandera," the Mexican said.

"Yes, I guessed as much when I heard the signal," the outlaw replied. "No sign of our game yet; there doesn't seem to be even a mouse stirring."

"The beggar has been too sharp for us; he has fixed the place of meeting above the hacienda instead of below it."

"I see; and by circling around the prairie, got at it."

"Yes."

"He has escaped us, then?" Dago cried, in disgust.

"No, no!" Bandera replied; "I do not think that he has come yet. One of my fellows tracked the person that the American comes to meet to a little clump of cactuses about half a mile above the hacienda, but saw nothing of the mustanger."

"We can probably get a chance at him, then?"

"I think so; but you must advance at once."

"Yes, Jose! Pepe!"

At the call, the half-breed and the Mexican rose from their ambush in the bushes.

"We're all ready, you see."

"Yes; come at once; I will accompany you as far as the hacienda," Bandera said.

The four set out, Bandera and Dago side by side, while the other two followed in the rear.

we buried that fighting devil in the well. *Vamos!*"

The three ruffians disappeared in the darkness. Bandera remained motionless at the gate of the hacienda for a few moments. A grim smile was on his thin lips and a demon light shone in his dark eyes.

"Devil of an American!" he muttered, shaking his clenched hand menacingly at the gloom, "you have won the love of my girl, but ere you win her in person you shall feel my hate. But one more deed of violence after this, and I am done with blood forever!"

And so Bandera had cried before.

"Another crime—the last—and I am done!"

How many times in this world has weak, selfish man cried thus, and how many times to pledge so freely taken has been as freely broken!

Bandera re-entered the mansion. Some few of the servants were gathered in a group within the inner court-yard, listening to a wild Indian legend told by an aged herdsman. The story was hushed for a moment as Bandera passed by them, for they were always awed by his stern and moody way.

The old Mexican went at once to his apartment. He opened the door and entered the room.

A cry of astonishment escaped from his lips.

Seated by the center-table, with the candle-light beaming full on his features, was Lope, the Panther!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

STRAIGHT FROM HADES.

BANDERA could hardly believe his eyes; but a second glance told him that 'twas no vision, but the adventurer, alive and well.

A beaming smile was on the face of Lope, and a peculiar light twinkled in his bold, black eyes.

It was plain that he enjoyed the astonishment that his presence had caused.

"Good-evening, senor!" he exclaimed, with easy politeness, and a gracious smile upon his features; "I trust that the health of my honored friend is as good when last we met and held sweet converse together. You can not guess how much I should be pained to hear of your illness. I should be in as much despair as a gold-digger when he discovers that his 'placer' had run out and that the supply of auriferous metal has come to an untimely end."

Bandera guessed at once that by some lucky stroke of fortune the adventurer had escaped from the trap which had been sprung upon him.

The first thought of the Mexican was to spring at the intruder and stab him upon the spot; mechanically his hand clutched the handle of his knife, but the quick eyes of the Panther saw the movement and instinctively guessed the thought in the brain of the other.

With a slight, careless movement of his arm, the Panther shook aside the ragged serape, which hung from his shoulder and covered his left hand, which rested upon his knee.

The hand gripped a pistol, the hammer was drawn back, exposing the flint ready for action.

"Check to the king!" cried the Panther, with a shrill laugh of triumph.

Bandera's eyes were blazing lightnings, but the adventurer quailed not. Few men could bear down the bold, glittering orbs of the Panther.

Bandera removed his hand from the handle of his knife and folded his arms calmly, although the fiery pangs of baffled hate were raging within his breast.

"Do you understand what check to the king means?" questioned the adventurer, with a sneer upon his face; "do you ever play chess? It's a wonderful game. When the king is in check he must either get himself out of his dangerous position, or else interpose some other piece. You sent your knights; I have swept them aside, and again you are in danger; what can save you? One thing only: lose the queen—the peerless Giralda! I hope that I have made myself sufficiently intelligible."

"Yes," Bandera said, slowly. Rage was burning in his heart, and his busy brain fairly ached as vainly he tried to devise some scheme to baffle the adventurer.

"I see by your face that you are somewhat surprised to behold me here. I came without ceremony. Ceremony is so awkward—so cold and formal between men like you and I—between men who understand each other so well, for I think that you are about the greatest scoundrel in this world excepting myself, and I've no doubt that you would like to see me dead, and nothing in the world would give me greater pleasure than to see you dangling at the end of a long rope in mid-air. You must allow that I am candid if not complimentary."

"Exceedingly so," replied Bandera, dryly.

"It is my nature—open and free-hearted—always ready to take half of any one else's property without give. And now that I think of it, let me give you a word of advice; don't attempt my life again, because you are only wasting money."

"Perhaps you are wrong," Bandera said, quietly, but the crust of ice concealed a center of fire.

"Perhaps you and I are honest men, but he who says so lies in his teeth," replied the Panther, coolly. "Bah! let us take off our masks; mine is gone already; why wear yours? I am not a child, to be deceived by a hollow smile or a few smooth words. I've had quite a wonderful adventure since I saw you last. Can you guess where I have just come from?"

Bandera shook his head.

"Straight from Hell!" cried the adventurer, pointing downward.

Bandera looked in the face of the other in wonder. The thought entered his mind that he was talking with a madman.

"And Satan sent me back to earth for you. He said that his kingdom would never be complete until he had Lope, the Panther, and Ponce de Bandera, roasting in the same fire!" and the adventurer laughed long and loud.

Bandera bit his lip in despair.

"I'll tell you all about it—how I met my death, I mean. A certain casket of lead was concealed in a certain well. I went for it. A friend of mine discovered by some means—how, I confess, I can not guess—that I would seek this well. The ambush was laid; the wolves waited for their prey; like a lamb I walked into the slaughter-pen. The combat begins; the lamb turns into a panther, and the wolves feel his teeth. They consult together, and the result gained is great. In fair fight, one bids fair to conquer three—the man at the bottom of the well to kill his assailants above one by one."

The wolves try strategy since open force failed. They toppled the stones, which form the coping of the well, down upon him—bury him living; exit Panther."

"But you escaped?" Bandera said, coldly.

"Exactly: in the side of the well was a hole; in the hole was the Panther, transformed for the nonce into a ground hog, chuckling with glee when he heard the stones rattle down, and the shouts of his enemies ringing in his ears. So sure were the wolves that they had finished their prey, that they cried aloud with delight. The man snugly curled up in his hole thought that it would be a sin for his assailants to have any doubts about their triumph after having so much trouble; so he uttered his death-groans in the most affecting and heart-rending manner. It would have pierced a heart of stone to have listened to the last despairing cries of that poor mortal."

In fact, the effect upon me was so strong, that I had quite an argument with myself before I could really believe that I was alive!" And the adventurer laughed quietly to himself.

"Well, what have you to say?" asked Bandera, a peculiar look appearing on his face; it was evident that he had thought of some plan which promised relief.

"Only to repeat my former request. I am madly in love with your beautiful daughter; give her to me, or else the consequences may be unpleasant. I suppose it is hardly necessary to remark that a certain leaden casket is in my possession; that in that casket I found the papers which I placed there some years ago."

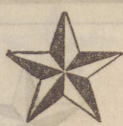
"How long will you give me to think this matter over?" asked Bandera, slowly.

"Oh, my worthy and esteemed friend, you are at it again!" cried the Panther, scornfully. "Why try your wits against mine, since so far I have beaten you at every point? You wish time to think the matter over, eh? Oh, no! I know better than that; you wish time to try some new device to remove me from your path. Now, I flatter myself that I have not lived in the world as long as I have, without learning something. I am alone, friendless; you are rich, powerful. Against your weapons I have only a single shield, a crafty brain. I am prepared for you. The best horse will stumble sometimes, though; you have attempted my life once, and failed; the second time you may be more successful. Lope, the Panther, falls by secret stab or sudden shot. Good! He is dead, and his secret dies with him! Certainly! a wise conclusion. But Lope, the Panther, knows the man he has to deal with. He confides the precious casket to a friend, and with it a pledge which will make that friend faithful to his trust. He says, 'If any thing should happen to me—if you should hear of my sudden death, or if you do not see me within three days, you will take that casket to a certain address in the city of Mexico; there you will deliver it, and receive so many golden ounces.' The parties in Mexico are already advised that their former companion is on a track which promises gold. Have you made the right deduction? When you kill Lope, the Panther, you only place three or four more panthers on the scent. You can buy me off cheaper than you can three or four men, each one as big a rascal as myself."

Bandera stroked his beard thoughtfully, while the Panther watched him, narrowly.

"Well, have you decided?" asked the adventurer at length, impatiently.

"Yes," the old Mexican replied, slowly. "You yield to my demand, then?"



A BIG IF.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

If I were the king of the world and master of every thing in it, A few little changes I'd make, beginning the very next minute. I'd make Mrs. Coupon who puts on such style and has servants to answer her wishes. I'd procure her a nice situation where she'd nothing to do but wash dishes. To the butchers I'd suddenly say, "We've too much of your shew and bone, like your steaks don't go down." And I'd say to my landlord, "Look here, I hunger and thirst for revenge. Please remove from my trunk the embargo and I'll seek a new tavern for change." Whom I loved should ever be young and possessed of their graces always. But those whom I hated should grow a thousand years old every day. If I were the king of the world and also chief Tammany in it, All swindlers I'd not hang in wrath, but I'd hang every one in a minute. And if I were the king of the world I'd go in for reforms and all those. And the very first thing I would do I would get me a new suit of clothes. I'd say to the banker, "My friend, I want your aid. I would stir up my creditors much by hastening to them to settle. If I were the king of the world, my rival who made life a week. I'd trouble myself greatly to please by hanging him up by the neck. As it is I can't help being civil to him though he did me that wrong. It's a way that I have to do such fellows when I find they're exceedingly strong. My vaults I'd make massive and large, and store in the silver and gold. I would pile it in there by the millions till the vaults were as full as they'd hold. But, as I am not king of the world yet, and fortune refuses to bow, I would not grow indignant if I had a dollar or two of it, now.

Fairy Story.

The Wonderful Ball.

IN THREE PARTS—PART I.

BY E. WILLETT.

Tip, tip, tip, down the stair. There was no other sound to be heard, except the purring of the gray cat on the hearth, the chirping of a cricket in the chimney, and the gnawing of a little mouse behind the wainscot. Harry turned over in his trundle-bed, and then raised himself up on his arm, that he might listen the better. The sound came nearer—tip, tip, tip down the stair, and then tip, tip, tip over the floor. Harry sat up in his bed, and saw, by the moonlight that streamed in at the window, what it was that had caused the sounds. A little old woman, hardly as high as a chair, with long gray hair, bright little eyes, and a face that was wonderfully plump, fresh and rosy. She wore a queer little blue bonnet, a pink jacket, a green petticoat, and high red shoes with enormous bright buckles. Harry instantly guessed who she was, although he had seen her but once in his life, at such a very early period of his existence that he could not be expected to remember her.

She was his fairy godmother, of whom his mother had often told him, who came to his christening party, and so greatly disappointed those who had invited her. She was expected, as she was a fairy, to give him some very valuable present; but she brought only a white ball, about the size and the shape of a hen's egg. All the company had laughed at this trifling present, after the fairy had gone away, and it was settled among the gossips that it would not be worth while to invite fairies to any more christenings.

As no one thought the ball worth taking care of, it was left to tumble about the house until Harry was big enough to walk and talk. One day his mother, declaring that the good-for-nothing was always in the way, picked it up and threw it out of doors; but the ball, as if angry at such treatment, rolled back in a twinkling, and bounced in to Harry's hand.

After that Harry was allowed to keep the ball, and everybody declared that such a plaything had never been known. He might throw it away as far and as often as he pleased, and it would always return to him. It lay under his pillow at night, and, when he was tired of playing with it, it would seek the same hiding-place; but, whenever he wanted it, it jumped right in to his hands. However he threw it about, it never broke any thing. If it struck the window, the mirror, or the glasses on the table, it bounced lightly back, without seeming to have touched them.

As Harry grew older, the ball developed some more of its wonderful qualities. It was always clean, bright and white as snow. If it fell into the mud, it came out pure and spotless. Even when resting among the miscellaneous rubbish of Harry's pockets, it never contracted a stain. If it was stolen from him, it was sure to find its way back. A big boy once took it away from Harry, saying that he meant to smash it, to find out what was in it. He laid it on a flat stone, and struck it with a heavy hammer; but the hammer, as soon as it touched the ball, jumped out of the big boy's hands, and flew up into the air, so high that it was never seen again.

Harry had always loved the ball. When the fairy's gift was treated with contempt, he hugged it the closer. When his companions spoke slightly of it, he felt all the more proud of its possession. It is true that he often wished that this wonderful ball might prove of some service to him, instead of being merely a plaything; but this did not render him any the less fond of it.

As the fairy stepped to Harry's bedside, he held out his hand, and the ball jumped from under his pillow. It hopped upon the palm of his hand, and spun around like a top.

"I know what you are thinking of," said the fairy, as Harry looked steadily at the ball. "It is a great pity, you think, that my gift can not be put to some use. You have been a good child, and you are old enough now to be trusted. It has been a nice plaything for you; but you are now to learn what wonders it can do."

The fairy took the ball, while Harry opened his eyes as wide as he could, tapped it thrice upon her nose, and set it in the palm of her hand.

Suddenly one end flew open, like the lid of a box, and out jumped a tiny man, no bigger than your thumb, dressed in a green coat and red breeches, and a smart cocked hat. He was such a funny little fellow, that Harry thought he would make a capital

tal plaything, and was about to pick him up, when he jumped to the fairy's other hand, and thence down upon the floor.

As soon as he touched the floor he began to grow, his clothes growing as fast as his body, and in less than five minutes he was a man in stature, looking down upon Harry and the fairy, and smiling and rubbing his hands.

"He is your servant," said the fairy. "What do you wish him to do?"

"He may black my shoes, if he will," replied Harry, after thinking a minute. "I was told that they must be blacked in the morning, and I don't like to black shoes."

The man took a box of blacking and a brush out of his pocket, and in a very short time Harry's shoes were blacked and polished so that you might have seen your face in them. He then began to decrease in size, as rapidly as he had grown, until he hopped up on the fairy's hand, and thence jumped into the ball, and she shut down the lid.

"You now know how to open the ball," said the fairy; "but you must never open it where any one can see you. If you do, it will never more be of use to you. The ball has one other quality that I ought to tell you about. It will never suffer you to do wrong while you keep it. Whenever you feel it swelling in your hand or in your pocket, you may be sure that your actions or thoughts are not such as they should be."

The ball jumped back to its place under Harry's pillow, and the fairy went tip, tip, tipping up the stairs.

Harry lay awake a long time, thinking of his wonderful ball, and when he went to sleep he dreamed of it.

In the morning he said nothing about the

the edge of the chasm, he bounded forward, and Harry shut his eyes.

Recollections of the West.

How Davy Crockett became a Substitute.

BY CAPT. BRUIN ADAMS.

It was once said of Davy Crockett by Mr. Hardin, better known, perhaps, as Ben Hardin, of Kettucky, who knew him better than any other man, "that where there was a chance to do a kindness for a woman, Crockett would sell his buck-skins if necessary, and hide in the swamps till he 'killed' another suit."

Whether the great "coon-hunter" was ever called upon to "shuck" in the cause of philanthropy, I know not, but there certainly are very many instances on record where he went great lengths to some other who were total strangers, and whom he very likely never saw again.

The war for Texan independence was at its height. Every able-bodied man in the State had been called to take up arms, and nobly had they responded to the call.

Crops were permitted to rot uncut for; cattle upon the prairies were left unattended, and so became scattered, and ultimately lost; ranches were deserted, save by women and children; in fact every one who could handle rifle or shot-gun had let go all else, and flocked to the standard that floated from a bough of the live oak beneath which the "old man" had his head-quarters.

It was during this time of excitement that

of the richer rancheros? In a word, who was to keep the palsied father and equally helpless mother from actual starvation? And then, again, the marriage that was to have taken place only the following month. What was to become of that?

But despite the gloomy prospects, desperate, in fact, the old father had told the boy to keep his word like a man, and maybe something or other would happen to keep them from starvation. And he had gotten down the old rifle that had done good service behind the cotton bales at New Orleans, and with infinite trouble, cleaned and oiled it ready for use.

Such was the condition of affairs at the wayside ranch when Crockett chanced to stop and demand lodging for the night.

The generous, sympathetic nature of the great hunter instantly became aroused, and leaving the family to discuss their sorrows among themselves, he walked out on the prairie to think the matter over.

"It's a hard case, a very hard case," he muttered to himself. "But I ain't sart in that it don't sarve the youngster as it ought to, for not bein' sure he war right before he went ahead. But the old ones, and the gal! They ar' the ones as'll suffer!" and so he continued, slowly pacing back and forth on the level bit of prairie, turning over in his mind some plan by which the difficulty might be met.

For more than half an hour he remained buried in profound thought, and then, as though he had discovered that for which he had been seeking, he suddenly raised his head, at the same time exclaiming:

"By the buck-skins of Old Hickory, I'll do it!" The other matter'll keep, and I can do just as much good thar as any whar else. Ther trouble'll be in dodging the General,

day, while he made all haste to join the forces of the commander-in-chief.

It was late in the afternoon of the fourth day after leaving the settler's ranch, that Crockett entered the patriot camp.

Carefully avoiding head-quarters, he wended his way to a certain part of the encampment, where, meeting a friend, he briefly related the story of the young Texan, and announced his intention of serving in the ranks as his substitute until the expiration of the time agreed upon. Knowing the character of the man, no attempt was made to dissuade him from the task, and so giving the required promise not to tell the General, the friend went his way and forthwith broke that promise by relating the whole affair to Old Sam.

Colonel Crockett was a great favorite of the veteran's, and he enjoyed the joke, as he considered it, immensely, determining for the specified time to ignore the existence of the colonel and recognize only the private under his assumed name.

In the meanwhile Davy sought for and found Roger Simpson, and cordially grasping his hand, shook it as that of an old friend, and deliberately asked if he had not faithfully kept his promise.

"What promise?" inquired Roger Simpson, who evidently looked upon Davy as some escaped lunatic.

"Why, my promise to report on a sartin day and jine Captain M——'s company," gravely replied the colonel. "I tell yer, Roger, the old folks war cut up bad 'bout my leavin', an' as fer my gal, she jess let right down. It was hard on a feller, I tell you."

"By hokey, the fellow's mad! clean daft!" exclaimed the bewildered Simpson. "Look a-here, you! Do you mean to say that you ar' Bob Tollis?"

"Why, Roger Simpson! What on airth ar' the matter of yer? Am I Bob Tollis? Who else am I, ef I hain't him, I'd like to know!"

"An' so should I, by hokey! Ef you ar' Bob Tollis, whar do you live?"

"Up on ther Colorado, jess twenty-two mil' other side of Roger Simpson's," was the cool reply.

"Well, I'll be roped!" was all the mystified Simpson could ejaculate, as he turned round in great disgust and was about marching off.

"Hold on, Roger," said Davy. "You hain't goin' to leave a neighbor in that way, ar' ye? I wants to see the cap'n, an' jine reg'lar. You know I said I would, an' I don't never go back on my word. You know that."

"I be cussed ef I know any thing 'bout you! An' see here, ef you keep on pesterin' me by puttin' on thet you ar' Bob Tollis, I'll jess mash your pumpkin-head fur you!"

Seeing that the joke had been carried about far enough, Davy took Simpson on one side and told him all about it.

"An' you've come down to sarve six weeks in Bob's place! Well, now, then, give us yer hand, fur ef you ain't a trumper, an' a big one at that, I'll be blowed!" exclaimed Roger, enthusiastically.

Davy was regularly mustered into Captain M——'s company, and forthwith began his duties as a private soldier, performing them faithfully and cheerfully, as befitting a good and true man. Davy, in relating the circumstance himself, declared that he got along well enough until it came his turn to mount guard at the General's quarters.

Here old Sam passed him many times during the day, always gravely returning the salute, but never seeming to recognize his old friend, save perhaps by a grim smile that showed about the corners of his mouth.

Once during the day the General stopped at the sentinel's post and kindly inquired after the old people at home, how they were

getting along, etc., and whether he had heard lately of a certain young person who, he had no doubt, was anxiously awaiting his return.

The farce was well played upon all sides, and so continued for nearly the whole of the specified time, but was ended at length just before the battle of Cedar Run, by the veritable Bob Tollis appearing, armed, equipped, and ready for duty.

But Davy never heard the last of the young woman who was so "anxiously waiting his return," and there was no one thing that afforded "Old Sam" so much amusement, as to inquire about her health and prospects.

Short Stories from History.

Curiosities of Science, (Continued.)

Pliny relates a pleasing anecdote of the invention of sculpture. Dibutades, the fair daughter of a celebrated potter of Sicyon, contrived a private meeting with her lover, at the eve of a long separation. A repetition of vows of constancy, and a stay prolonged to a very late hour, overpowered at length the faculties of the youth, and he fell fast asleep. The nymph, whose imagination was more alert, observing that, by the light of a lamp, her admirer's profile was strongly marked on the wall, eagerly snatched up a piece of charcoal, and, inspired by love, traced the outline with such success, that her father, when he chanced to see the sketch, determined to preserve, if possible, the effect. With this view, he formed a kind of clay model from it, which first essay of the kind had the honor to be preserved in the public repository of Corinth, even to the fatal day of its destruction, by that enemy to the arts, Mummies Archæus.

Des Cartes gives the merit of the first construction of a telescope to James Metius, a person who was no mathematician. He says, that as he was amusing himself about the year 1590, with making mirrors and burning glasses, he casually thought of looking through two of his lenses at a time; and that happening to take one that was convex, and another that was concave, and happening, also, to hit upon a pretty good adjustment of them, he found that by looking through them, distant objects appeared very large and distinct. In fact, without knowing it, he had made, says Des Cartes, a telescope.



Tracked to Death—Chapter XLIV. A Retreat Prevented.

visit of his fairy godmother, or the discoveries that he had made concerning the ball. As soon as he could he hurried away to a grove, where he might be alone. After looking about carefully, to make sure that no one was watching him, he tapped the ball thrice upon his nose.

It flew open like a watch-case, and, greatly to the surprise of Harry, who had expected to see the little man appear again, out jumped a tiny horse, no bigger than a walnut, as black as a coal, and ready saddled and bridled.

Harry was delighted when this miniature horse leaped upon the palm of his hand, and thence to the ground, where he grew so rapidly that in a few minutes his back was nearly as high as the boy's head.

Harry had learned to ride, and no boy in the country was fonder of riding than was he. He fairly shouted with delight as this beautiful black pony stood before him, whinnying and whisking his tail, as if anxious to be rode. Harry at once jumped upon his back, and away the pony bounded, galloping at the top of his speed.

This was fine sport for Harry, who had now mounted such a spirited horse, and his enjoyment of the ride was intense. He thought, at first, that he would never get tired of galloping at that rate; but he did get tired, after a while, and wanted the pony to go a little slower. He also began to fear that he was going too far from home, and thought he had better turn and ride back.

He was not a little frightened at perceiving that the horse would not slacken his gait, nor would he turn about and carry his rider home. In spite of all Harry's efforts, he continued to gallop at the top of his speed, and held his course straight on, as if he had neither rider nor bridle.

Harry soon got over his fright, as he thought no harm could come to him from the fairy's gift; but he again became uneasy when the pony carried him into a dark and somber wood, where the branches of the giant trees, crossing and interlacing overhead, entirely shut out the sunlight.

His fear was still more strongly excited when, after passing through the wood, he saw before him a great chasm, so wide that no horse could leap across it, and so deep that he could not even guess how deep it was.

He pulled at the bridle with all his strength, and shouted at the top of his voice; but the pony galloped right on, and there was no stopping him. As he reached

important business took Colonel Crockett into that sparsely-settled region of country lying along the upper Colorado. And late one afternoon he drew rein at the door of a small ranch that stood alongside the trail he had been following.

As he dismounted upon the doorstep, the sound of weeping and wailing came from within, a sound that never failed to arouse the sympathy of the hunter, more especially if it came from a woman, as was evident in the present case.

Without ceremony, for none is ever expected in these regions, he pushed open the door and entered, but as his eye fell upon the scene within, he was about to withdraw.

"Come in, stranger, come in. We're in a heap 'of trouble, but there's nothin' to be ashamed of. Hitch the critter, an' come right in."

It was a remarkable group that greeted Davy's vision as he walked in.

Near the center of the room was seated a gray-haired old patriarch, across whose lay a long-barreled rifle, who, with palsied hands, was pouring powder into a large horn from a package of that material; at his feet lay a cat-skin pouch, evidently well supplied with bullets.

Near his side was the old wife, down whose furrowed cheeks the tears were slowly coursing. While in front stood a fine-looking young fellow, upon whose shoulder leaned a young girl, weeping as though her heart was breaking under some terrible grief.

The story was soon told.

The call for volunteers had reached the isolated ranch, and the young man, absolutely their only support, had announced his intention of at once joining the patriot army. In fact, he had sent word to a certain ranger-captain by a neighbor who had already gone, that he would report for duty in his command on a certain day.

Such being the case, there was no backing out; he would be hooted from the country, when the war was over, were he to fail to keep his word; but when he came to make known to the old people, and one other, the step he had taken, he was met by such a storm of grief that his resolution had nearly failed him.

Who was to look after the crops, now nearly ripe for harvest, and how were the cattle to be prevented from straying away to other and distant places, there to be swallowed up and lost amid the immense droves

but that can be managed, likewise, I reckon."

Seemingly satisfied with the plan he had worked out, Davy returned to the ranch and again entered the room.

The old people were as he had left them, but the young man and his affianced had gone over to the window, where he was talking in a low tone, while she continued to weep, evidently refusing to be comforted.

Davy Crockett had but one way of doing any thing, and that was to go straight to the point and have it over as soon as possible.

Adhering to his own motto, he had, while outside, made certain that he was right, and he was now prepared to "go ahead."

Calling the young man to his side, he inquired how long a time it would require for him to get his affairs in order; that is, to gather such of the crop as was ready for harvest, get up and brand such of the cattle as needed it, and lay in a supply of salt and dried meat that would last the old people a reasonable period.

The question took all present by surprise, but the young Texan answered promptly.

"Six weeks, you say. Can the thing be done in that time?" inquired the colonel. "Thar's wood, too, to be hauled and cut, you know."

"It could be done in the time mentioned," the young man replied.

"Well, then, just buckle in and do it," said Davy. "I'll see that thar's a good and true man that'll answer to your name at roll-call, one that you needn't be afraid'll bring disgrace on you, an' who can handle a rifle prop'ly as well as yourself."

"But they'll know it ain't me!" Roger Simpson will, and he'll—" began the young recruit.

"Roger Simpson won't do any thing of ther sort," interrupted Davy. "If you ar' willin' to do as I say, an' promis' to report as soon as ther work ar' done, I'll see that no blame falls on your shoulders."

It would be impossible to depict the joy and gratitude of the settler's family, when they fully realized that the project was a feasible one; and when, on the following morning, the stranger mounted his mustang to start for the army, he was overwhelmed with protestations of gratitude to such an extent that he put spurs and took to flight.

The business that had taken the warm-hearted hunter to the north was deliberately thrust aside, and left to wait until another